Parental Involvement in U.S. Study Abroad: Helicopters or Helpers

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Kevin Lorenz Dostal Dauer

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Dedication

For my family. For the few who went to college before me, but most importantly for the two in whom I hope this may inspire the same love of lifelong learning that my parents and others instilled in me. For those in my life who have demonstrated both patience and understanding throughout this process and for those who gave just the right kick in the pants.

Abstract

Parental involvement in higher education has received much attention since the 1990s, though mostly through mainstream media sources. The term "helicopter parents" is now used to describe over-involved parents who 'hover' over their children, intent on ensuring that their children's needs are addressed. The perception within higher education is that such parenting is detrimental to student development and unnecessarily complicates the relationship between the student and their institution of higher education.

Study abroad has been widely shown to have wide-ranging positive impacts on the development of undergraduate students including gains in academic success, life skills, and psychosocial development. Parental involvement in study abroad has been reported as one of the top ten concerns for international education professionals for the past decade, but relatively little research has been done that explores the intersection of parental involvement and study abroad. Research has not definitively ascertained whether the notion of parental over-involvement in study abroad is anecdotally-driven or a documented reality.

This study examined the extent to which parents are involved in the undergraduate study abroad experience of their student and the ways in which particular characteristics of the parents and students are related to that involvement. The study was conducted using an original, web-based survey instrument and was administered to undergraduate students at three study abroad providing institutions, two public land-grant research universities and one study abroad consortium of 14 private liberal arts colleges.

The survey was completed by 382 students for a 19.7% response rate. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, correlation, and three regression model analyses.

Findings indicated that parents were significantly less involved in initial choice of study abroad program than they are in other higher education experiences prior to study abroad, thus lending support to the idea that helicopter parenting may not apply uniformly to all aspects of study abroad. A relationship was found between parental involvement in student choice of study abroad and the geographic location of the student's program. Parents were found to be more likely to communicate more frequently with a female student and more likely to communicate more frequently if their student was participating in a long-duration program. Numerous variables were shown to be related to parents' decision to visit their student during a study abroad experience, including previous parental study abroad experience, level of previous student travel, type of institution from which the student was studying abroad, the geographic location of the study abroad program, and the duration of the program.

Findings support a framework for understanding parental involvement in study abroad and provide helpful insights for future design and allocation of resources for parental interactions with study abroad offices.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

During her service as U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton stated: "[s]tudent exchanges are some of the most important people to people connections we can have" (Clinton, 2010). First Lady Michelle Obama, speaking in Beijing, China, stated: "…studying abroad isn't just a fun way to spend a semester; it is quickly becoming the key to success in our global economy" (White House, Office of the First Lady, 2014). To better facilitate such student exchanges and study abroad programs, U.S. institutions of higher education need a clearer understanding of the factors supporting and deterring students from engaging in study abroad opportunities. One such factor working for or against study abroad participation is parental involvement, but this is a factor underrepresented in the research literature on higher education. This study will begin to bridge that existing gap by conducting a comprehensive assessment of parental involvement in study abroad.

Parental involvement has become a critical topic in recent years in the halls of higher education. The relationship between parents and their sons' or daughters' college or university was relatively static from the founding of U.S. higher education until the students' rights era in the 1960s and 1970s. Much of that history saw seasonal or annual programming created by the institution targeting the parents, but the relationship between the parents and the college or university was rarely ever considered problematic. Despite a near complete disappearance of any parental contact for almost two decades, parents

and institutions began to re-establish their relationship in the 1980s and 1990s. This was a slow process as evidenced by the fact that almost 75% of college parent program administrators who responded to a survey reported that their offices or parental outreach efforts were created on campus since 1990 (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Parent programming is now stronger than ever and for many campuses includes parents' weekends, parent orientation, parent newsletters, parents' councils, and university staff devoted exclusively to parental connections. While the demand for such initiatives clearly exists, research documenting the necessity or implications of parental involvement in higher education is much less available. Dr. Patricia Somers, a leading researcher on parental involvement in higher education, has publicly stated that truly academic studies investigating this topic are rare (Randall, 2010). This is concerning given that Coburn (2006) has predicted that active parental involvement in higher education is likely to continue for years to come. A major challenge with this trend is that no one has established to what extent parents are actually involved in many aspects of U.S higher education or what the resulting consequences of that involvement truly are.

Higher education staff and faculty and the mainstream media express their opinions openly about "helicopter parents" and the extreme version of this phenomenon, the "Blackhawks." "Helicopter parent" is the popular term for over-involved parents who 'hover' over their child, intent on ensuring that they are available to attend to their child's needs whether wanted or not. The "Blackhawks" are defined as an extreme version of the helicopter parents, those who are willing to extend their involvement into unethical realms on behalf of their child. These terms have reached accepted status in the

English language, now appearing as entries in Wikipedia and some dictionaries. Spin-off concepts have also been created including “lawnmower parents” (willing to mow down any challenges in their child’s path), “submarine parents” (who appear as if from nowhere to advocate for their child), and “stealth parents” (who are quiet observers from the background but willing to strike seemingly out of nowhere) (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Parental involvement has also been recognized internationally. For example, in Scandinavian countries, these parents are known as “curling parents” who sweep problems away from their children (Essig, 2014). The concept of the over-involved parent has been embraced and utilized by popular culture, but there has not yet been substantial research done on these parents and their real or perceived impact.

While the terminology of helicopter parents has entered popular usage, the reality of parent-student relationships within higher education is not as definitive. Wartman and Savage (2008) stressed the importance of putting these parents in the context of the entire parent population, where it becomes clear that they represent a small, extreme percentage of the overall population of higher education parents. Some students seek out and encourage the levels of contact epitomized by the notion of helicopter parents, while others seek distance and an opportunity to strike out on their own as part of their collegiate experience. This balance between attachment and separation is a critical theme in the recent literature surrounding parents and higher education and has potential to be utilized as an eventual component of the exploration of parental involvement in study abroad as well. For instance, Savage (2003) discussed the importance that today’s college students place on familiar comforts, one of which is the stability and connections of the

family unit. This concept is supported by Mikal (2011) who demonstrated the critical role that electronic connections play in aiding students during their initial transitions to a study abroad location. Alternatively, Coburn and Treeger (2009) wrote about the importance of separation for both the student and the parent. Their caution to parents focused on the fact that parents' over-involvement could actually be preventing their student from exploring a critical component of personal and student development unbeknownst to the parent.

Though parental influence is clearly evident in early college processes such as selection of potential institutions or admissions (Wartman & Savage, 2008), there is little documentation of parental involvement in study abroad. In his comprehensive review of the origins of study abroad in United States higher education, Hoffa (2006) detailed numerous historic examples of parents approving of or arranging for international study or travel while also displaying an apprehension for the safety of the experience, especially given the relatively loose structures in place to support or guide students in earlier eras of international study. He stated that despite the concerns of American parents regarding the overseas travel desires of their children in the 1950s and 1960s, they still chose to support the endeavor, economically and otherwise, because of the perceived value of such an experience.

One area of study abroad where a clearer connection with parental involvement does seem to exist is regarding safety and responses to specific international crises. There is evidence to demonstrate that parental concerns were chief among the issues handled by study abroad offices in the wake of international terrorist attacks such as September 11,

2001 and the London Underground bombings (Rubin, 2002; Lipka, 2005) and that parents' main concerns about study abroad center around safety concerns (Coburn & Treeger, 2009; Hoffa, 2006; Savage, 2003; Bolen, 2001). In one study that links parents to a direct impact on students' study abroad experience, McKeown (2003) compared pre-September 2001 study abroad participants with those exploring the opportunity after the attacks and documented that students interested in study abroad after September 2001 perceived decreased encouragement and increased concern from their parents in relation to their potential journey. Savage (2003) confirmed this apprehension on the part of parents in light of various terror attacks throughout the world. This is not, however, simply a recent trend. In fact, colleges sent informational letters to parents as early as 1934 to allay their fears about safety abroad (Hoffa, 2006). This cursory review demonstrates a link between parental involvement and study abroad in relation to concerns about safety.

If parental concerns about study abroad increase as the world faces terror attacks, pandemic disease, and civil unrest (especially in high study abroad interest locations such as Paris, London, and Madrid), higher education administrators can anticipate that parents will increasingly insert themselves into the study abroad world and possibly impact their students' choices related to studying abroad. As a result, knowing and managing parental attitudes regarding study abroad will be a critical component of continued recruitment and matriculation of students into study abroad programs, especially if parents become more and more involved in the financing of higher education. If parental concerns keep students from selecting or engaging with study abroad destinations that are deemed or

perceived to be unsafe, students may increasingly find that study abroad providers are offering more limited ranges of programs and destinations. Both of these scenarios potentially threaten the future growth of study abroad, and subsequently, the delivery of various positive outcomes that have been widely shown to follow from this particular undergraduate opportunity.

Parental impact on students' study abroad decision-making is too influential to be left to anecdotal speculation, and yet little academic research has focused on determining the extent of parental impact on this experience. The Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE) stated that "we know all too little about whether students are pursuing their own goals or are influenced by others" (2006, p. 3), including parents, as they make decisions about study abroad such as whether and where to go. Considering the dramatic increase in research on study abroad since the 1970s (Vande Berg, 2007), there appears to have been an omission regarding the impact of parents in this endeavor. While the link between parental involvement and study abroad in the wake of international crises or safety concern is both logical and well-documented in the literature, little is known about how and when parents are involved in study abroad in the absence of such crises. This study will begin to help bridge the research gap by investigating these questions: to what extent are parents involved in the undergraduate study abroad experience of their children and how do various characteristics of parents and students impact that involvement?

This research seeks to discover the complicated nature of parental involvement in U.S. study abroad, beyond common perceptions and anecdotal stories. Approaching this topic, the anticipation is that parents are involved to some extent in the choice of their

student's study abroad program and that the involvement is quantifiably higher when students are studying in regions of the world that are perceived to be less safe. Further, the research seeks to document that parents and students communicate quite frequently, perhaps even more so than higher education administrators suspect, and that the types of communication are almost exclusively electronic in nature. The era of postcards and airmail letters is past. Finally, this study seeks to provide quantitative data on the prevalence of parental visits to students during or connected to their study abroad experience. Evidence in practice indicates that these visits are more prevalent than anyone is currently acknowledging.

The next chapter will highlight the extensive research that has been conducted on the positive impacts of study abroad as well as demonstrate how existing literature on parents shows consistent involvement across multiple components of their children's higher education experience. A model for exploring parental involvement in study abroad will be outlined and supported with previous research. Existing literature will assist to identify the institutional, student demographic, and parental variables that will be utilized to examine the nature and scope of parental involvement within U.S. study abroad, expanding upon the findings of the limited previous research in this area. This model and these identified variables form the foundation of the survey and analysis that follows in later chapters. Through these resources and informed by previous literature, this study will seek to answer the primary research questions: 1) To what extent are parents involved in the undergraduate study abroad experience of their children? 2) To what extent are various characteristics of parents and students related to that involvement?

(From this point forward, the study will use the terms “parent,” “parents,” or “parental” as universal terms inclusive of biological or adoptive parents as well as a student’s established guardian or guardians.)

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Since 2006, the Forum on Education Abroad's Data Committee has conducted five "State of the Field" surveys, seeking input from colleges and universities, third-party study abroad providers, and other key stakeholders regarding critical trends and issues faced by the education abroad field. In each of those five surveys, parent involvement has been reported as one of the top ten overall concerns within education abroad, including ranking as the number one concern in the 2006 survey (Forum on Education Abroad, 2014). Practitioners in the field of education abroad talk about the history of parental involvement, especially within the contexts of both risk management and general parental contact with office staff, as having evolved through three phases in the past three decades: 1) a surprise phase where administrators and staff were caught off guard by the intensity of parental involvement and found themselves behind the curve in addressing it; 2) a management phase where education abroad sought to mitigate or manage potential issues and enhance services in an attempt to work with parents to address concerns; and 3) a recently evolving proactive stage in which the goal is to anticipate student needs and quickly manage situations in an attempt to "stay ahead of the story" (Forum on Education Abroad 2014 National Conference, personal communications, April 2014).

Higher education is recognizing the need to study parental involvement at a much deeper level than anecdotal story-telling and the mainstream media. NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education commissioned an entire monograph devoted

to exploring the ways in which institutions can better partner with parents (Keppler, Mullendore, & Carey, 2005). Numerous authors cited elsewhere in this literature review have called for additional research on either parental involvement in general or parental involvement in study abroad (Schiffrin, Liss, Miles-McLean, Geary, Erchull, & Tashner, 2014; Cullaty, 2011; Carney-Hall, 2008; Jackson & Murphy, 2005). The ratio of college students with parents who have some college education to first generation college students is now six to one across higher education and that ratio will only continue to grow (Astin & Oseguera, 2004). As a result, parental involvement is likely to become more prevalent and the debate about the value of parental involvement will continue to evolve.

To examine the importance of this research topic and its relevance to multiple constituents within U.S. higher education, one need only conduct a brief examination of the well-documented benefits of study abroad and then consider the increasing numbers and percentages of U.S. college students choosing to engage in study abroad. This literature review will begin with an overview of the documented outcomes of study abroad and then continue with a review of the relevant research related to parental involvement in U.S. higher education. The literature review will conclude with an examination of research connecting parental involvement and study abroad.

Relevant Literature on Study Abroad

"What nations don't know can hurt them…for their own future and that of the nation, college graduates today must be internationally competent" (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, 2005, p. ii). Early research on U.S.

study abroad focused on the positive outcomes that students achieved as a result of their experience as a way to demonstrate the value of the endeavor for all stakeholders involved. The fact that study abroad opportunities provide some unique student outcomes is now largely accepted within the field, so only a brief overview will be provided in this chapter. After the early research focus on outcomes, debate in international education shifted to the design of programs with an attempt to demonstrate the best structures for delivering this educational initiative. Until recently, this program design debate focused on options such as "island programs" (where a U.S. institution recreates all components of U.S. higher education, including instruction and support services, at a stand-alone venue at some destination abroad), "exchanges" (U.S. students potentially switching places with a student enrolled in a foreign institution), and "faculty-led programs." This cataloguing of programs has become outdated since the terms in use are not mutually exclusive (Vande Berg, Balkum, Scheid, & Whalen, 2004).

In recent years, a new classification system created by Engle and Engle (2003) has focused attention instead on eight pre-identified components of program structure: duration, pre-existing language structure, use of language in instruction, type of faculty, rigor of coursework, inclusion of experiential learning initiatives, type of housing, and presence of mentoring or guided reflective exercises. When the debate focus shifts from the overall design type of programs to multiple structural factors such as those that exist in this classification scheme, variations certainly exist in the determination of outcomes of particular study abroad programs and assessment becomes more complicated. Such is the nature of the current debate in study abroad regarding the impact of various programs.

Additionally, questions remain as to whether students who study abroad are significantly different, as a whole, from their "at-home" counterparts often used as control groups in studies of these outcomes (Sutton & Rubin, 2004). In general, however, there are numerous positive outcomes of international study that have been widely documented in the literature as significant in either short term or longitudinal studies or both, and it is with such outcomes that this literature review will begin. For the purposes of this brief review, these outcomes will be organized into three broad categories: academic outcomes, life or skills-based outcomes, and psychosocial impacts. There is certainly more research on study abroad outcomes beyond that reviewed here, but this overview is intended only as a demonstration of the critical impact study abroad can have in the lives of college students.

Positive Impacts of Study Abroad: Academic

There has been wide-ranging research published regarding the impact of study abroad on future academic success. Hadis (2005) reported not only a greater academic focus among returning study abroad participants but also an increase in their perception of the intrinsic value of their education. The report from the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) (2007) indicated that study abroad has a significant positive impact on what it termed 'reflective learning' and study abroad was named one of higher education's "high impact activities" for creating a greater level of engagement and persistence for participating students. This report, created after NSSE compiled nearly 300,000 student survey responses across a representative spectrum of almost 600 higher education institutions, showed that students who study abroad earn higher grades in

college and “engage more frequently in educationally purposeful activities upon returning to campus” (p. 17).

Additionally, in a study of more than 3,000 study abroad alumni, Dwyer and Peters (2004) found that almost 90% reported that their study abroad experience modified or shaped subsequent educational decisions or their eventual career path. Contrary to the long-held belief that students avoid study abroad because of the potential for delay in their graduation date, Ingraham and Peterson (2004) found that on one U.S. campus that is a major sender of students abroad, those students who participated in a study abroad program graduate in less time than their non-study abroad counterparts. Research compiled by the Office of Institutional Research and reported by the Learning Abroad Center at the University of Minnesota supported this study with data ranging over six years of incoming first year students and across the spectrum of graduation in four, five, or six years (Learning Abroad Center, 2009).

Study abroad has also been shown to have a positive impact on learning and acquisition of content. Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill (2009) conducted a study across five institutions using the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI) and found that the greatest area of development for education abroad students was the Knowledge domain, which includes cognitive understanding of multiple cultures and competence in multiple languages. Ryan and Twibell (2000) illustrated that study abroad led to an increase in academic knowledge and an increased interest in graduate study. In addition, Sutton and Rubin (2004) found significant positive differences in the areas of functional knowledge (also documented by Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004), knowledge of geography, knowledge of

cultural relativism, and knowledge of global interdependence between study abroad and at-home groups which were controlled for differences. Farrell and Suvedi (2003) found increased knowledge of the host country, the distinct culture, and general international issues in research on study abroad students in a Nepalese program.

Undoubtedly the greatest area of research regarding learning and content, however, is in the area of language acquisition. Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, and Paige (2009), in their large-scale study of approximately 1,300 students across 190 home institutions with a control group from four institutions, found that study abroad students showed significantly greater gains in oral proficiency than their at-home colleagues and across a number of other variables. Churchill and DuFon (2006) outlined the results of decades of research in the area of study abroad language learning and presented studies that showed development of reading skills and literacy (vocabulary recognition and test comprehension), listening skills, oral proficiency, fluency (narrative abilities, pronunciation, and grammar) and use of colloquial words. The authors also cited studies that indicated decreased levels of learner anxiety, especially given longer lengths of study abroad programs. These authors summarized their review of the literature by concluding that though short term programs do offer success in language acquisition, longer programs show greater gains but that those gains only typically approximate full fluency acquisition. On a related note, Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) found that study abroad students were both more patient with non-English speakers and more disposed to speaking in a foreign language as compared to a control group of non-study abroad students.

Positive Impacts of Study Abroad: Life or Skills-Based

There have been numerous life or skills-based outcomes attributed to study abroad as well. Orahood, Kruse, and Pearson (2004) found that business students who studied abroad were more likely to seek employment from companies with an international focus and had a stronger interest to work abroad as compared to those who did not study abroad. Orahood, Woolf, and Kruse (2008) found an increase in interpersonal and communication skills among business students. They also documented the self-reports of study abroad alumni who recognized the value to their careers provided by some key transferable skills developed through study abroad such as flexibility and adaptation. Peppas (2005), in a study of non-traditional aged students engaged in a short-term business study tour, found that an overwhelming 90% of respondents indicated a positive impact on their performance in the workplace and many indicated through open-ended questioning that their employers had selected them for tasks specifically related to international issues as a result of participation in the program. Additionally, Dwyer and Peters (2004) documented that alumni reported study abroad as an experience which led to the formation of lifelong friendships.

Farrell and Suvedi (2003) demonstrated through individual case studies that study abroad did help the participants of one particular international program have a greater focus on their lifelong goals. On the other hand, quantitative data from the same study found the lowest perceived impact among several study abroad outcomes was related to career plans and professional direction setting. These authors attributed lower scores on

these measures to the fact that the students in their study were not yet focused on professional or life skills at the time of the assessment.

Positive Impacts of Study Abroad: Psychosocial

Psychosocial outcomes are the area that has received the greatest amount of research focus regarding study abroad impacts. Documented positive outcomes include increased international and political awareness (Carlson & Widaman, 1988), an enhanced international perspective and heightened personal awareness (Zorn, 1996), development of a greater sense of intercultural sensitivity (Rexeisen, Anderson, Lawton, & Hubbard, 2008; Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004; Dwyer & Peters, 2004: Engle & Engle, 2004) or at least intercultural awareness (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004) especially as the duration of the program increases (Engle & Engle, 2004; Medina-López-Portillo, 2004), increased independence and self-reliance (Laubscher, 1994), a greater appreciation for the arts (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004), and positive impact on the self-confidence of students (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009; Dwyer & Peters, 2004). Other outcomes in this area documented by Hadis (2005) include a greater sense of global-mindedness and open-mindedness, increased decision-making independence, and a disposition toward international mobility (also documented by Orahood, Kruse, & Pearson, 2004).

In what to date is one of the largest studies of education abroad, Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, and Paige (2009) found that study abroad students made significantly greater gains in intercultural competence and sustained those gains during a five-month period post-return as compared to an at-home control group. They also confirmed, however, that unless these students were provided with intervention in the form of

targeted engagement or reflection during their time abroad, they did not show these same gains. This data suggested that a mentor, guide, or other on-site staff member who connects regularly with students while abroad significantly increases the students' intercultural development. Contact with another culture is simply not enough, not even when students are participating in a homestay with a local family. This contradicts a commonly held belief that homestays are a component of study abroad that can serve as a metaphorical 'silver bullet' to enhance intercultural development.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), in their volume chronicling student development research of the 1990s, cited studies to demonstrate that study abroad promotes a greater tolerance and acceptance of others, an increased interest in international issues, decreased reliance on stereotypes or myths, an increased desire to promote international cooperation, and positive growth in principled moral reasoning. Barbour (2006) stated that a core component of many study abroad programs is seeing, experiencing, and reflecting upon the harsh difficulties faced in some impoverished parts of the world. He illustrated this through detailed examples of students interacting with children begging on the street or digging through garbage piles, and then outlined the processing he conducted with students as they faced the guilt of living in an economically advantaged society. These are not experiences that one can gain from studying foreign cultures in the comfort of your home university, and this greater understanding of one's position of privilege among study abroad students was also demonstrated in the research of Chieffo and Griffiths (2004). This is the international consciousness that comes only from experiencing the world by going beyond one's borders. As Barbour (2006) stated, study

abroad can help students to a better understanding of both the world's problems and the larger social justice context: the developed world's responsibility in contributing to the international systems that sustain certain inequalities.

As demonstrated above, the outcomes of study abroad are wide-ranging and well-documented through a variety of types of studies and across the dimensions of academics, life or skills-based outcomes, and psychosocial impacts. As Savage (2003) states: "Few educational opportunities provide such enlightening and gratifying experiences as study abroad" (p. 172). Counter-arguments to the positive nature of study abroad certainly exist, though these arguments tend to focus on perceived value-added measures like high cost and return on investment. Besides the minor points included above from individual studies, no other existing research study was found in this review that comprehensively demonstrated negative academic, life or skills-based, or psychosocial impacts of study abroad.

While the intercultural and student development outcomes from study abroad are clear, the overall relevance of study abroad to higher education policy also depends on rates of student participation. If the idea of good education policy is more students in programs that demonstrate positive impact, then the second part of the question about the relevance of this research is participation. An endeavor such as study abroad can demonstrate high levels of positive outcomes for students, but if its ultimate impact on higher education as a whole is limited by low rates of access or participation, further research on the topic might not be considered a fruitful endeavor for doctoral students or any other higher education researcher. With this in mind, the literature review now shifts

to a brief examination of levels of education abroad engagement among U.S. higher education students.

History and Trends of Participation in Study Abroad

Study abroad is no longer the exclusive domain of the elite as it was prior to the expansion of programs, services, and providers in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, prior to the 1950s the number of U.S. students studying abroad was relatively insignificant. The few who did go abroad did so almost exclusively to Europe and rarely for credit. Those who were going abroad prior to this initial growth in popularity were more often following the European model of the "wanderjahr" or a period of travel just designed to see the world. Though experiential and educative, it was usually not a component of any formal education (Hoffa, 2006). The nature of study abroad began a dramatic change in the two decades following World War II. In 1958, Stanford University opened the first branch campus of a U.S. higher education institution abroad near Stuttgart, Germany, and in 1962 the College Year in Athens (CYA) opened as the first non-higher education study abroad provider (Hoffa, 2006). These two events signaled a path that opened study abroad to a great diversification and growth process that continues today.

The actual number of students studying abroad annually has increased consistently since 1950 (Dwyer, 2004). Despite pronounced growth in the numbers of students studying abroad, the actual number of students studying abroad represents only a small percentage of the total population of U.S. higher education participants. In 2014-2015, the latest year for which data are currently available, a record 313,415 U.S. students studied abroad, a 2.9% increase compared to the previous year. Though that one

year increase seems minimal, the total number of students abroad represents a 16% increase compared to five years ago and a 52% increase compared to ten years ago. However, the number of participants still only equates to approximately 10% of U.S. undergraduate students having any study abroad experience before graduation (Institute of International Education, 2016). It should be noted, however, that the Open Doors report from which this data is drawn consists only of students studying abroad for credit and does not include those abroad for work, internships, or non-credit experiences. In 2014-2015, an additional 22,431 students reported these types of international education experiences. As a result, the percentage of students receiving an international education experience would be somewhat higher.

As a raw number, slightly under a third of a million students might lead one to believe that study abroad is not a critical topic of research given its low participation numbers as a percentage of the overall number of students on campuses across the U.S. What makes research on study abroad worthwhile is the potential for the future of this endeavor to reach an increasingly higher percentage of students. Jenkins (2002) cited a survey by the American Council on Education's Center for Institutional and International Initiatives that showed almost 50% of all incoming undergraduate students expected to engage in a study abroad experience. There have been significant gains in study abroad enrollment among non-traditional students and students selecting shorter term experiences since the mid-1990s (Vande Berg, Balkum, Scheid, & Whalen, 2004; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004). Multiple colleges and some universities are now requiring an international experience as part of the undergraduate curriculum (Lipka, 2006), and other

institutions (such as Michigan State, Harvard, San Francisco State, and the University of Minnesota) have sought to increase participation through institutional approaches (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, 2005).

On the federal level, proponents of the recommendations of the Lincoln Commission sought to alter education policy to infuse millions of dollars into U.S. higher education with the goal of dramatically expanding study abroad opportunities for students. The Lincoln Commission's original goal was to raise the actual number of study abroad participants to one million by 2014 (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, 2005). Though this legislation did not pass the full U.S. Congress, other similar initiatives have followed such as the recently announced "Generation Study Abroad" venture spearheaded by the Institute of International Education. This project seeks to bring together leaders in the field to brainstorm new ways to increase study abroad participation supported by increased funding, mobilization of high school teachers to support the initiative, and engagement of study abroad alumni. The goal of Generation Study Abroad is to have 600,000 U.S. students in study abroad programs by the 2017-2018 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2014). This essentially constitutes a doubling of participation in study abroad within the five years of the initiative.

Study abroad participation rates are lower than average for first generation college students, transfer students, students at community colleges, students deemed non-traditional by age (24 years of age or greater), and male students (Lipka, 2007). These populations all represent potential growth areas for the industry. Rust, Dhanatya, Furuto,

and Kheiltash (2008) reported that ethnic minority first year students were as likely as their ethnic majority peers to express an interest in study abroad, but the most recent data indicate that 72.9% of students who did study abroad were white/Caucasian (Institute of International Education, 2016). Rust et al. used Alexander Astin's Theory of Involvement and Vincent Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure to assess a link between student involvement on campus and the likelihood of studying abroad. They found that students who studied abroad were more academically involved, showed higher levels of socialization with friends, were more politically active or aware, frequently socialized with other ethnic groups, and were more likely to engage in volunteer work (Rust et al., 2008). Some higher education institutions are actively creating mechanisms to address underrepresented populations' participation in study abroad (Parcells, 2010), and as a result there is significant growth potential in the future of study abroad. Such a growth could have a substantial impact on the way in which higher education operates and dramatically increase the number of study abroad alumni who have reaped at least some of the positive outcomes outlined above. Based on demonstrated outcomes, current participation rates, and most especially potential participation rates, this is noteworthy research to an extensive proportion of higher education.

Literature on Parental Involvement

There is a rich research history of parental involvement conducted on primary and secondary education. For students across all levels preceding higher education, parental involvement has been shown to have significant positive impacts on the personal and academic development of students (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Parental involvement at

these levels is not only recommended, it is actively encouraged as demonstrated by its inclusion in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 wherein the Department of Education offers specific suggestions on activities and types of engagement for parents in supporting their child's education (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). As a demonstration that the encouragement of parental involvement at this level of education is not a partisan component of only a Republican administration's education program, the Democratic administration that followed published a very similar pamphlet outlining ways that parents can be positively involved in the educations of their children as a part of President Obama's "cradle-to-career plan to reform our nation's schools" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 5).

Parental involvement in higher education is quite another matter. The origins of U.S. higher education, the colonial colleges, operated under a very specific doctrine of *in loco parentis* ("in place of parent") for much of their early history. Despite challenges to this approach, most notably by German-trained Ph.D.s who came into leadership of higher education institutions following the U.S. Civil War, it remained securely in place until the unrest of the students' rights and freedom movement in the 1960s (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). Although higher education's relationship with its students changed after the 1960s, its relationship with parents would not evolve for another two decades. Sells (2002) described the role of parents from the 1960s until the mid-1980s as that of largely a bystander. As a result, there is little literature on services provided to or direct involvement by parents in U.S. higher education prior to the mid-1980s.

By then, there was a growing conflict between the parental bystander role and higher education's moderated approach to student development and responsibility that resulted from the student's rights protests of the 1960s. Since there was no easy replacement for *in loco parentis* in a time of great unrest on campuses nationwide, various legal decisions began to redefine the relationship between higher education and families from a more laissez-faire approach to one that involved institutions having a duty to share in the responsibilities for the safety and education of the student. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, legislative provisions such as the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990 (Cleary Act) and the 1998 Alcohol or Drug Possession Disclosure amendment to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) served to create both a greater transparency of institutional action and parental notification systems for all institutions accepting federal education funding (Sells, 2002). Actions taken by institutions as a result of this movement began to include the creation of parent orientations, parents' associations, and offices specifically charged with maintaining and managing parent communications and contacts. These enterprises and policies signaled the shift toward what has become today's expectation of greater parental connections to higher education.

While Sells (2002) described this change as moving toward a greater responsibility on the part of higher education, Bolen (2001) described it as a shift to a contractual relationship between students, parents, and the institution. Bolen took a consumerist view of parental involvement when she described parental attitudes as viewing education as a commodity, a specific product or article that could be purchased

or acquired for one's own benefit. In Bolen's view, this seemed to fit with the rise in expectations, entitlement, elitism, and spending power that increasing numbers of students bring to their higher education institution. More recently, Henning (2007) has suggested that perhaps a new relationship exists between parents and higher education, and he has labeled this new model *in consortio cum parentibus* or "in partnership with parents." Henning views parents as a critical third partner, but the relationship between the student and the college remains paramount. Parents are welcomed as participants in the process under the assumption that the students invite them to take part.

Regardless of whether one perceives the rise of parental involvement as a result of a legal duty on the part of the institution, as a parental view of education as an economic contract, or simply as the natural extension of a generation of parents who have been more highly integrated into the lives of their primary and secondary school-aged children, what seems clear is that some parents are playing an ever-increasing role in the lives of their college children. Jacobson (2003) reported that parents are more involved than ever in the recruiting, admissions, and selection processes of higher education. She cited numerous examples of parental involvement in the college application process and described the propensity of parents to threaten or file lawsuits to protect the interests of their children. As millennial generation students progress through their academic careers, their involved parents are following right along with them. Savage (2003) provided examples of parental involvement in everything from unpacking a student's residence hall room to contacting university staff or professors on behalf of the student to discuss grades or concerns about classes. Coburn and Treeger (2009) detailed how many parents

believe it is a part of their role as parents to intervene or make decisions on behalf of their students because they perceive that they ultimately know the best course of action for their individual child. Mueller (2014) illustrated a rise in parental involvement in the graduate admissions process and gave an example of parents calling graduate level professors to discuss student grades. Graduate and professional programs are expanding the capacities of their admitted students' visits to accommodate parents who are accompanying their children. Mueller states that, thus far, this trend has been limited to professional schools, mainly business and law schools, and has not yet seemed to impact graduate programs in arts and sciences. The cases where parental involvement has been noted as a component of graduate education, however, have only surfaced over the past decade.

These are genuine examples of the rise of parental involvement, and more specific examples detailing parents' engagement at various stages of a student's progression through higher education will be presented later in this chapter when the conceptual model for this study is presented and supported. More generally, however, the pattern that emerged from the published literature regarding parental involvement was that the relationship between students and parents begins to transition as the journey into higher education commences. Wartman and Savage (2008) summarized this point noting that all families share the experience of feeling some level of nervousness or anxiety about the transition to higher education, and these feelings transcend differences such as socioeconomic status, educational participation, or degree completion in the family's history.

The general impressions of and reactions to parental involvement within higher education tend to be negative, and usually seem to focus on the idea of the 'helicopter parent' even though that type of parent represents the extreme example of engagement. There are, however, many documented positive outcomes of parental involvement. From the perspective of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the nature of parents' concerns and support usually focus within the three base levels of needs: physiological (housing, food, proper sleep), safety (health, resources, security), and love/belonging (family, friendship, positive roommate relationship). Once established and sustained, students can focus their energies on the levels of esteem (confidence, achievement, respect) and self-actualization (creativity, problem solving, acceptance of facts). If parents can be a positive force to ensure that base level needs are met, students can focus their attention on learning within that supportive environment. Another example of the positive impact of parents was offered by Lipka (2007) who utilized data from the National Survey of Student Engagement to illustrate that students of parents who positively intervene to assist their students are more engaged in and satisfied with their college experience. Contrary to the prevailing message about the student-parent relationship, appropriate levels of parental involvement oftentimes contribute to positive outcomes.

Students will most certainly change as a result of experiences during their college years. This is a time of discovery, trying new things, and experiencing challenge. This will inevitably lead to some reflection and change as a part of the journey. Having the confidence and ability to fall back upon the stability of family can be a particularly helpful tool for coping with the challenges of those changes (Savage, 2003). In the

context of that change, a supportive parent can provide some measure of safe support. While it is true that students will increasingly seek such support and understanding from peers and move away from their nuclear family as a natural component of maturation, parental involvement can fulfill an important gap during that time of exploration. Wartman and Savage (2008) encouraged parents and college administrators to stop viewing the college years as an abrupt metamorphosis from childhood to adulthood but rather as a gradual journey that might include some challenges requiring some amount of support from those who know the students best.

Parental involvement is, of course, a double-edged sword in that too much of a good thing can create additional challenges. Many of the parents of the current generation of students have spent a significant amount of time invested in the lives of their children, and both the parents and the students come to college with high expectations for what they will receive. After years of supporting their children through soccer camps, music rectials, and other developmental activities, the excitement that comes with finally going to college is accompanied by the pressure of the dreams and aspirations of the entire family unit. These expectations can take the form of a desire for involvement that inhibits the student's ability to think critically, solve their own problems, and learn important lessons about navigating difficulties. Savage (2003) stated: "Most problems are fleeting, and parental involvement not only is unnecessary, it is also unwanted" (p. 61). Coburn and Treeger (2009) posited that the demonstration of independence is a desired outcome of the transition to college, but the path to achieving that independence can often cause anxiety and apprehension for the parents.

According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), one of the critical objectives for traditional aged college students is the idea of moving through a stage of autonomy and developing skills of interdependence. They need to learn to think critically and make decisions based on the information they have. Unfortunately, parents can hinder that process if they are too involved. "Too often, parents inhibit their children's growth without realizing how their good intentions are backfiring" (Coburn & Treeger, 2009, p. 8). Some have referenced the modern cell phone as the ultimate umbilical cord between parent and child, but in the case of students in higher education, it could also be viewed as a barrier for the personal development of those on both ends of the calls.

Ideally, parents have the best interests of their students in mind as they engage with institutions of higher education. Whether they are acting in a nurturing role in support of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, acting out of a sense of believing they know what is in the best interest of their children, or acting as an agent on behalf of the future of their student as outlined by Jacobson (2003) in her review of parental involvement in the recruitment and admissions process, the one thing that is certain is that they *are* acting and having greater contact with higher educational institutions. Given the familial financial investment necessary for some study abroad programs, documented parental concerns about safety in study abroad, and parental involvement in most life processes up to the point of study abroad, it is reasonable to assume that parental involvement extends to the arena of study abroad as well.

A Confluence: Study Abroad and Parental Involvement

Having reviewed the impacts, history, and prevalence of study abroad and the rise of the concept of parental involvement in U.S. higher education, it is apparent that our tertiary educational system is facing a confluence of these two phenomena. Unfortunately, there has not yet been an associated focus among higher education researchers on the potential impacts, successes, and challenges associated with this intersection. This is not to say, though, that parental involvement and study abroad have had no connections in the relevant literature. A quick review of the confluence of parental involvement and study abroad in the literature is in order before looking at the few actual studies focused on this intersection.

Literature linking Study Abroad and Parental Involvement

Parents are featured in the literature of formal study abroad throughout almost its entire existence. For centuries, scholars travelled throughout the known world seeking the wisdom to be found in places such as Athens, Rome, the famous Library at Alexandria, and Constantinople during the European Dark Ages. European nobility sent their sons abroad for a worldly education, seeing the sights of foreign lands, building connections with foreign leaders, and learning about people and lands to become a well-rounded future leader or aristocrat. A remnant of this idea of travel as education without the formality of academic work remains a part of some Europeans' approach to schooling today as many students set off on a "wanderjahr" or gap year experience travelling throughout and beyond their home continent (Hoffa, 2006).

Such was the beginning of parental involvement in U.S. study abroad as well. Wealthy families of colonial society sent their children abroad armed with parental letters

of introduction that would create opportunities for acceptance among royal courts throughout Europe. Furthermore, since early colonial colleges did not offer certain professional or science subjects such as law, medicine, or engineering, U.S. students needed to be sent abroad for their formal education in these subjects. Of course, only colonists with significant resources could afford to do this, and the only destination considered was Western Europe since European higher education was seen as superior to that in the United States or anywhere else in the world until nearly the end of the 19th century (Hoffa, 2006). This was not, of course, the same type of study abroad as that which exists today, but the notion of securing some aspect of education through travel or full time study in another country parallels today's motivations for some in the U.S. higher education system. Study abroad from within a U.S. higher education institution did not fully exist until Bryn Mawr offered the first scholarships for women to study abroad in 1891, though it is not known if those students received academic credit for their time abroad (Hoffa, 2006).

Historically speaking, parents are first mentioned in relation to an official study abroad experience in news reports regarding the departure of Smith College students via cruise liner bound for the school's study abroad program in Paris in 1925 (Hoffa, 2006). As might be expected, family members displayed apprehension about the experience as the ship pulled away, assumedly not unlike the feelings of family members today as a plane departs a gate at a domestic airport bound for an international destination. Early on in U.S. higher education, parents had shown a much greater approval of travel abroad when it was conducted in conjunction with faculty from the institution as opposed to

individual travel or that done solely with peers. As early as 1934, however, institutions were communicating with parents via letter regarding safety abroad to alleviate their fears (Hoffa, 2006). The number of students abroad in those early years ebbed and flowed in conjunction with international tensions or wars and tended to mirror U.S. foreign policies of both isolationism (pre-wars) and intervention (post-wars). Whatever misgivings U.S. parents had about sending their children overseas for study or travel, however, they continued to generally support the endeavor as a worthwhile and enriching experience (Hoffa, 2006).

Setting aside historical accounts and the few examples from the introduction above, there have been a number of other connections between parents and study abroad in the literature of higher education. Some of these have been in relation to the research on predicting which students will study abroad. There is a relatively robust body of literature surrounding parental-related predictive factors including socioeconomic status, social and cultural capital, family cultural norms, previous international travel experience, previous parental study abroad experience, and parents' level of ethnocentrism. Most of these factors are quite specific, but some students face what can only be described as generic family resistance to study abroad (Rust, Dhanatya, Furuto, & Kheiltash, 2008).

An additional component of the study abroad predictive research literature focuses on apparent parental influence on study abroad participation due to safety concerns. For example, McKeown (2003) quantitatively documented a decrease in parental encouragement of study abroad in light of increased safety and security concerns

after September 11, 2001. Savage (2003) stated that "international acts of terrorism in recent years have made parents cautious about study abroad" (p. 168). Ogden, Soneson, and Weting (2010), in their review of trends in the diversification of study abroad destinations, specifically stated this about safety abroad: "[a]lthough there have been few documented instances of American students as specific targets of political violence in the history of study abroad, fears of anti-American sentiment may discourage students and parents from study abroad in less familiar destinations" (p. 192). They continued by acknowledging that this perception of anti-American feelings around the world has been substantiated by studies in the wake of the start of the Iraq War in 2003. Prior to the Iraq War, Scharman (2002) attempted to mitigate these fears, to some extent, by noting that no matter what steps are taken to increase awareness and security, crime happens in all countries around the world just as it does in the United States. Others who have documented safety concerns by parents or families regarding study abroad include Wilkinson (2002) and Bolen (2001).

Similar to the examples of federal legislation mentioned above in the section on parental involvement in higher education (Clery Act and FERPA), there are also examples of safety concerns of parents and families translating into legislation related to study abroad. The most relevant example is the recent legislation in Minnesota regarding the reporting of health and safety incidents abroad. In this case, a particular parent whose son died during a high school experience abroad has been the driving force behind creating new regulations for study abroad providers to enhance transparency within the field. This legislation passed and became law in 2014. The statute has changed the

training and operating procedures of Minnesota's institutions of higher education and created new reporting requirements overseen by Minnesota's Office of Higher Education. Similar legislation was passed in Virginia in 2016, and it is possible that these actions may influence the creation of new laws or regulations in other states or at the federal level.

A second aspect of the literature that has connected parental involvement and study abroad surrounds the notion of expectations of the experience abroad. Bolen (2001) approached this from a consumerist perspective as she discussed parents' calculation that they have purchased a certain standard of program and experience by investing in study abroad. She posits that given parents' relative lack of knowledge of this endeavor, there is a natural carry-over of *in loco parentis* as parents expect more from university and program staff. Ogden (2008) explained this consumerist notion as an extension of a colonialist system. As he stated: "Without hesitation, students (and their parents) are increasingly demanding familiar amenities and modern conveniences while abroad and seemingly with total disregard to host cultural norms or feasibility" (p. 37). Vande Berg (2007) also noted that with the rise of student services as a part of the undergraduate experience on campus, parents and students are increasingly conditioned to expect similar services and support abroad despite the fact that many learning environments students will encounter abroad look significantly different than their home institution and do not offer similar levels of student services. This argument was echoed by Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz (1990) in relation to food, shelter, sleep, health, and communications and was again documented two decades later by Cressey and Stubbs

(2010) in relation especially to living standards, food, and access to electronic devices. Mikal (2011) specifically researched study abroad students' use and perception of the internet and found students unanimously expecting and relying upon their virtual connections throughout their time abroad. All participants in his focus groups reported utilizing the internet daily to maintain "contact with members of the home culture with the primary goal of obtaining socio-emotional support" (p. 22). Finally, parents also approach study abroad with expectations of what the experience will yield for their student upon their return. Simply put, parents have an expectation that study abroad is going to provide an advantage to their student in the job market upon graduation (Trooboff, Vande Berg, & Rayman, 2008).

A third area of literature connecting parents and study abroad is the proliferation in recent decades of parent study abroad guides published by associations of study abroad professionals or study abroad program providers. NAFSA: Association of International Educators has published at least three texts or pamphlets regarding or directed toward parents while most direct study abroad providers now provide parent-specific information either in print or electronic form. This information covers a wide range of topics including providing parents with resources on finding more information, safety abroad, debunking popular myths, potential positive outcomes, re-entry adjustment, and educating parents on appropriate roles they can play in ensuring their student has the best possible educational experience. Examples of such education include statements such as: "Study abroad is different and it's supposed to be different" (Council on International Educational Exchange, 2005, p. 8) and "[s]tudents who are cajoled or forced into study

abroad by external pressures…often have trouble adjusting to its many challenges" (Hoffa, 1998, p. 8). Not all of the language in these guides is so subtle. For example, Hulstrand (2007) cautioned parents that overuse of the cell phone can undermine the intercultural experience of their child. In fact, a consistent message in these guides is the importance of students facing challenges, learning to accomplish tasks while abroad on their own, and discovering that while they might need to vent frustrations or concerns to parents, there is much to be gained by reflecting on their own experiences and attempting to work through difficulties on their own.

A final type of literature linking parents and study abroad are publications in the popular press designed to assist parents in navigating their student's college experience. The existence of these guides is a clear demonstration of the rise of parental involvement in U.S. higher education, despite the fact that the guides themselves often encourage parents not to be overly involved. Though typically covering the entire undergraduate experience, these guides seem to all include at least a small section on assisting to navigate the study abroad experience. Savage (2003) discussed the importance of the study abroad experience in terms that seem quite encouraging for parents. For instance, she noted that "[f]aculty and staff see international experiences as the ideal illustration of all they are trying to encourage: independence, accomplishment, and problem solving" (p. 165). She took an educative tone as she described how any small accomplishment is big when it is achieved abroad and that each new success for the student breeds a new level of confidence, a notion reinforced by Coburn and Treeger (2009). These guides also present a realistic side as well, acknowledging that it often remains psychologically and

financially difficult for parents to send their students abroad (Savage, 2003) but that some parents will be quite liberated by their child's study abroad experience (Coburn & Treeger, 2009).

Specific Research on Parental Involvement in Study Abroad

While parents and study abroad have come together on the periphery in numerous ways in the literature of higher education, there are in comparison few research studies that directly and specifically investigate the idea of parental involvement in study abroad. What follows is an overview of each study including the focus, conclusions, and limitations.

The most recent study was a master's thesis by Christine Parcells, a student in the Department of Educational Policy and Administration at the University of Minnesota (Parcells, 2010). Ms. Parcells confirmed the need for additional studies on parents and study abroad by stating in her introduction: "There is no research focusing specifically on parental involvement in study abroad and limited study abroad research mentioning parents" (2010, p. 3). Parcells used a mixed-methods design to investigate the parental role in study abroad from the perspectives of a university study abroad office and parents of study abroad participants and then attempted to assess alignment between the perceptions of those two stakeholders. She conducted interviews with study abroad office staff and the university's parent program coordinator, observed the study abroad office's parent orientation session, administered a survey to parents of recent, current, or confirmed future study abroad participants, and conducted focus groups with parents.

Parcells found that the parents in her study were generally very engaged with their student's study abroad experience and supportive of the positive outcomes expected from it while acknowledging that the students were competent and able to be responsible for their own experience abroad. There was uncertainty among the parents in her study, however, regarding the appropriate levels of involvement, especially given the fact that the students often were initiating contact in an attempt to engage the parents or seek their assistance. Breakdowns in communication between parents and students often led to greater parental contact with the institution. Parcells also found that parents generally did not have access to or knowledge of the resources that are available to them regarding study abroad even if they had previous study abroad experience themselves.

From the perspective of the study abroad office staff interviewed for this research, Parcells found that staff conversations with parents were somewhat constrained by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) but that the focus of the office's approach to parents was to educate them on appropriate boundaries while helping parents to understand their role in empowering the students to assume responsibility for their own study abroad experience. Staff in this office also expressed that they believed they had reaped great benefits from collaborating with staff in their university's parent liaison office and from the interactions they were able to have with parents in the study abroad parent orientation sessions. Numerous staff interviewed as a part of this study indicated that given the unfamiliarity that exists regarding study abroad programming and resources, study abroad for today's college student serves as the main challenging personal development transition experience that simply going to college may have been

for a previous generation of students. Finally, Parcells noted on multiple occasions that a scarcity of time and financial resources constrained this study abroad office from providing all of the resources and student services they have identified as important for their target populations of students.

Ultimately, Parcells concluded that there was a lack of congruence between the expectations of parents regarding communication and the expectations of the study abroad office at this one particular university. Unfortunately, Parcells' study has some limitations for generalizability and applicability of conclusions. This research was very specific to a single institution and did not address the perceptions or experiences of the actual study abroad students themselves. No student input was gathered as a part of the study, and Parcells identifies this as a recommendation for future research. Though the parent survey achieved an adequate response rate, the parent focus group involved only five parents from three family units. (The design called for a second focus group with additional parents but this session was cancelled and not re-scheduled due to inclement weather.) A case study design certainly seemed appropriate for this study in order to deeply explore and richly articulate the concept of parental involvement in study abroad, but the recommendations and implications are focused almost exclusively on practical applications for the study abroad office at the one institution involved and therefore may be pertinent only to the operational structure of that particular unit.

The second study of parental involvement in study abroad was a case study seeking information about increasing study abroad participation at Mount Holyoke College (Paus & Robinson, 2008). This study analyzed existing admissions and study

abroad data sets and combined these with results from senior class survey data to create a predictive model of study abroad participation. What was instructive about this predictive model in comparison to many other predictive studies that have been done was the inclusion of what the authors called "encouragement effects," which included faculty and parental encouragement. The final data set used for the study included 2,335 students who were asked to indicate the extent to which family had influenced the decision to study abroad.

Results from this survey indicated that there was no correlation at Mount Holyoke between parents' previous college attendance and a student's decision to study abroad, but that parental encouragement was a significant factor in deciding to study abroad. This impact was less significant than the encouragement of faculty, but the only other factor that had a more significant impact in this study was whether or not the student was majoring in a foreign language. Of the students at Mount Holyoke who reported being highly encouraged to study abroad, almost 78% followed through and completed a program. In contrast, of those who reported receiving no encouragement, only about 27% studied abroad. Finally, when the researchers broke the data down by demographic factors, they discovered that high-income parents with previous college attendance were more likely to encourage their female student to study abroad (Paus & Robinson, 2008).

While this study supported the impact of positive encouragement by parents, there were some limitations to the usefulness of this study. First, the data was collected at a single, relatively small, private institution. Though the sample size is impressive, the researchers acknowledged that because some demographic categories of students are

simply not represented at this institution, they were limited in their ability to generalize across many different types of students. Additionally, they acknowledged the potential flaw of asking students to recall in retrospect the level of parental encouragement they received before studying abroad, when their memory may well have been influenced by the level of support and encouragement they received while actually studying abroad. A final note regarding this study is the fact that parental encouragement was only one small component of this research design, so the authors' primary research question was not related to parental involvement.

The third study concerning parental involvement in study abroad was a doctoral dissertation by Lisa P. Chieffo at the University of Delaware. Chieffo (2000) conducted a survey of over 1,000 students in thirty classes during the fall of 1999 with a goal of determining why more students did not engage with the many study abroad opportunities available at the University of Delaware. She sought information from students about participation rates, awareness of available programs, reasons for non-participation, and factors that positively influenced participation. For the purposes of this review, only the last two sections were relevant. Among the factors for non-participation that Chieffo explored were both student concerns with political events or security abroad and parents' lack of support. In the section on factors that positively influenced participation, Chieffo asked students to rate both parental encouragement and financial support from parents.

Chieffo found that among students who had not yet chosen to study abroad, neither security nor parental support were relevant factors in their decision. In fact, 83% of students who had not yet chosen to study abroad reported that parental influence was

not at all a factor in their decision, however the question was not posed as to whether any influence exerted on these students was in favor of or against study abroad. Interestingly, among those who had decided to study abroad, parents were cited as the people with the greatest influence on the decision to study abroad. Fifty-two percent of students who had decided to study abroad reported that their parents exerted some or a great influence on their participation. Additionally, almost 60% of this same group reported that the financial support provided by parents had some or a great influence on their decision to participate in study abroad. This seems to indicate that parents have a greater influence on the decision to study abroad if they are supportive of the decision, but unfortunately we do not know from this survey if the parents of those who had not yet decided to study abroad provided them with encouraging support, no encouragement at all, or negative encouragement.

Chieffo undertook this study with a goal to provide administrators at the University of Delaware with insights into the participation planning of potential study abroad students and with the plan to offer direct suggestions to various units of the institution to provide greater support to study abroad. She did recommend that recruitment for study abroad programs should begin with the process of recruiting students to the institution and that the Office of Admissions could play a much larger role in beginning to educate both parents and students about study abroad. However, despite finding clear evidence that parents are the people who exert the most influence on students in the decision-making process surrounding study abroad, she offered no

suggestions as to how the study abroad office could use this data or better market their programs to the parents of students at the institution.

There are several important limitations to note in the Chieffo study. First, the survey disproportionately sampled students in foreign language classes and majors, and those students have historically studied abroad at levels higher than the average student population. All of the conclusions regarding factors supporting participation are based on 78 responses from students who had already decided to study abroad, which is only 7% of her overall sample. Finally, Chieffo's study was conducted over fifteen years ago during a period of much lower participation in study abroad and at a time before the September 11, 2001 attacks, so the continued usefulness of the data, especially in relation to students' concerns about security in study abroad, must be questioned.

The final study of parental involvement in study abroad was a master's thesis written by Dyna Hermann, a student at the School for International Training. Hermann (1999) collected responses to a questionnaire from study abroad advisors at five public higher education institutions in Oregon, conducted a survey of students at four of those same schools, and completed phone interviews with parents at one of those institutions. She received 13 returned advisor questionnaires (a 76% response rate), 73 completed student surveys (a 15% response rate), and arranged interviews with fourteen parents of unique students. There was no connection between the students surveyed and the parents contacted. In this study, Hermann attempted to ascertain parents' role in selection of and payment for a study abroad program as well as whether or not study abroad advisors

should attempt to work directly with parents throughout the process of the study abroad experience, from initial interest through re-entry.

Hermann found that parents were involved in study abroad to a greater extent than she had originally hypothesized and that the viewpoint held by a majority of the parents in her survey was a desire to be highly involved in their student's study abroad experience. One particular parent seemed to summarize this feeling particularly well when offering the following comment to the interview: "We've been involved in her education all the way through and study abroad is a part of all that. We should be involved, therefore" (Hermann, 1999, p. 45). Unfortunately, there was at least one instance within Hermann's study that unintentionally demonstrated the very concern she was trying to disprove. When tabulating the data from her student survey, Hermann discovered at least one instance in which a parent had completed the student's survey on behalf of the student. However, Hermann also documented some differences in parents' level of involvement. From the parents' perspective, she found that the level of parental involvement was related to parents' contribution of payment for the program and that parental involvement was significantly less if their student was over 25 years of age. Another demographic feature also correlated with a difference in approach to study abroad by parents was the finding that parents of female students expressed higher levels of concerns for safety in the study abroad experience as compared to the parents of male students.

In regard to connection with the institution, Hermann found that a majority of parents were interested in attending a pre-departure orientation related to their student's

study abroad program. She also documented that among the interactions between these study abroad offices and parents, the parents were initiating most of the contact, which signifies a different approach from the study abroad office in Parcells' study. This may, however, be related to the fact that Hermann's study was completed a full decade before that of Parcells. Hermann noted that the top five reasons for parents to initiate such contact were: 1) financial aid inquiries, 2) seeking information specific to their student's study abroad program, 3) to address questions of billing, 4) asking about the nature of administration at the on-site location, and 5) to raise concerns or ask questions about student safety abroad.

Responses from the student survey within Hermann's study indicated some other interesting findings. Less than one-third of the student respondents indicated that their parents were very or somewhat involved in the decision to study abroad. Just under half indicated that their parents were very or somewhat involved in the preparation for study abroad. There were no gender differences in these results, but students who identified as 25 years or older tended to seek less parental involvement. Among those students surveyed, 71% had asked for assistance from their parents in advance of their study abroad experience, but only 57% did so during their time abroad. Furthermore, 95% of students indicated that they at least attempted to solve an overseas problem before seeking help from parents or staff. Unfortunately, Hermann did not assess how much, if any, of the differences in those levels of assistance-seeking was due to the separation or communication barriers that may have existed while the students were abroad. Either way, this data did confirm another of Hermann's suppositions that parents are the primary

resource that students turn to for guidance, assistance, and advice. She indicates that this is a critical reason to ensure that parents are well-informed about the study abroad program and the resources available to them, and she posits that study abroad offices should be engaging parents to an even higher degree.

Hermann's study suffers from the fact that her conclusions are drawn from very small samples of parents, staff, and students. Additionally, problems with her research design and implementation limited the time available to conduct parent interviews and called into question the sampling method used to contact parents. Her data is also challenged by an inability to track advisors, parents, or students among or across the five institutions that were involved in various parts of the study. Additionally, the fact that this study is also over fifteen years old limits its applicability given the vast development in the field of education abroad in the same time period.

While these studies of parental involvement in study abroad provide some insights, they each have some limitations and collectively do more to illustrate the need that exists in U.S. higher education for greater exploration in this area. It is important to continue to examine parental involvement in study abroad as there simply is not a clear understanding of the extent to which parents are involved in this aspect of higher education even though the strong positive impacts of study abroad in terms of psychosocial, life skills, and academic development of students is well-documented. U.S. higher education is seeking to expand study abroad programming to reach previously under-involved populations of students while organizations such as the Institute of International Education are working to create a coalition to double U.S. study abroad

participation over the next five years (Institute of International Education, 2014). These are potentially significant educational policy initiatives that will have an important impact on the future of U.S. higher education, and yet little research has been completed on the involvement of parents, who would clearly be a critical stakeholder in this expansion.

None of these previous studies have specifically focused on establishing the extent to which parents are actually involved in the study abroad experience. Parcells (2010) and Hermann (1999) focused on practices of study abroad offices related to interacting with parents. Paus and Robinson (2008) and Chieffo (2000) focused on predicting student participation in study abroad, and parental involvement was a minor factor of each study. This research proposal intends to expand higher education's knowledge of the involvement of parents in study abroad by exploring these primary research questions: 1) To what extent are parents involved in the undergraduate study abroad experience of their children? 2) To what extent are various characteristics of parents and students related to that involvement?

Model and Critical Factors for Exploring Parental Involvement in Study Abroad

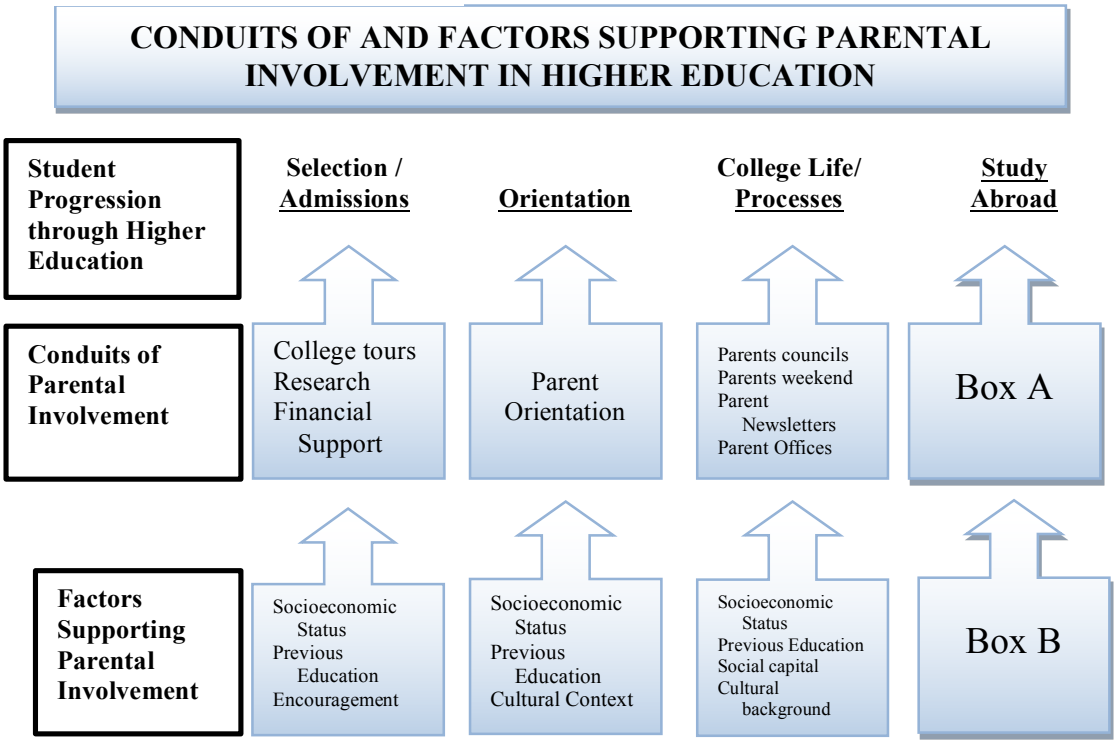
The existing literature illustrates an emerging pattern of increased parental involvement in higher education processes from admissions through orientation and continuing into annual college life. While data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (2007) indicates that, averaged across all types of students, about 70% of students have frequent contact with at least one parent, the pattern is by no means universal across groups of students. Just as each college student is a unique person with

individual needs, goals, and challenges, so too are there a wide array of differences in parents' approaches to their child and their child's institution. As will be outlined below, the literature demonstrates that factors such as previous parental education and socioeconomic status are correlated with the level of parental involvement in student processes such as admissions and orientation. The factors that have been shown to be associated with parental involvement in U.S. higher education are compiled into a model titled "Conduits of and Factors Supporting Parental Involvement in Higher Education" (see Figure 1 below). Previous studies have already provided the conduits of and factors supporting parental involvement in other higher education processes, but none of the previous studies have presented a model or framework for understanding parental involvement in study abroad. This study will extend that model to study abroad (the right column in the model) by identifying the conduits of parental involvement in U.S. study abroad (represented by Box A in the model) and testing factors that support such parental involvement (represented by Box B in the model) to determine whether or not the importance of those factors differs based upon either student/parent characteristics or the type/length/design of the study abroad experience. After analysis, this study will present a framework for parental involvement in study abroad.

The next section of the literature review will directly follow the student progression through higher education as shown in the model (left to right) from selection/admissions through orientation to standard college life/processes. For each of these stages of the student progression, trends in parental involvement will be illustrated and the factors supporting differing levels of parental involvement in each stage will be

identified. Through this portion of the literature review, a list of potential factors supporting parental involvement in U.S. study abroad (Box B in the model) will be created that can be tested in the study to determine whether or not the factors that support parental involvement in higher education experiences prior to study abroad also can be applied to parental involvement in study abroad.

Figure 1: Conceptual model



Source: Author

Parental Involvement in College Selection / Admissions

Jacobson (2003) and Wartman and Savage (2008) have documented the historical trends of parental involvement in the college selection and admissions processes. These

authors cited numerous articles supporting the connection between parents' knowledge of higher education systems, largely gained through previous college attendance, and the levels of support felt by students throughout the college selection process. Parents' ability to financially support multiple campus visits can also play a critical role in aiding their student's ability to determine which institution might provide the best fit for their educational experience, and a positive fit is a factor that contributes heavily to the student's persistence in college. Parental encouragement and support, especially financially, over the years leading up to entering college have been shown to be the most important factors in a student's educational pursuits (Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1999), and those students from upper-middle class families who have invested their lives in preparing for college and beyond are receiving increasingly more support and encouragement from their parents in the college recruitment and selection processes (Wartman & Savage, 2008).

Ullom and Faulkner (2005) outline the challenges that many students face as they approach the college selection process, not the least of which is the perspective offered by parent(s) who may have attended college in the 1980s or 1990s, a time when higher education was significantly different than the campuses that will greet students today. While more and more of today's incoming college students have parents with previous higher education experience, this is by no means universal. Through the previously listed publications, the impact of socioeconomic status, previous education experience, and encouragement are all differential factors involved in parental involvement at the stage of college selection and admissions.

Parental Involvement in Orientation Programming

Perhaps the single greatest opportunity that institutions of higher education have to establish a positive partnership with parents is through orientation programming. This is the process through which the institution has contact with the highest number of parents and, when implemented most successfully, it is approached as a time of transition for both students and parents as well as an opportunity to set boundaries, define resources, and explore difficult issues (Ward-Roof, Page, & Lombardi, 2010). Documented outcomes of parent orientations include an understanding of resources available to the student, an understanding of the college's expectations of both the student and the parent(s), and affirmation of the college choice (Ward-Roof, 2005).

While the history of the initial development of parent orientation programs is unclear, there is no shortage of research or published work regarding the important components of parent orientation programs. Though there is no single schedule that fits all institutions or all families, parent orientations are recommended to include sessions such as introductions of key administrators, overview of collegiate resources, sessions to guide parents on continued contact with the college, a welcome to/by the parents' council or parent office, a ceremony or ritual of some kind (Coburn & Woodward, 2001), information about crisis response and campus safety, information on privacy laws such as FERPA, campus tours, sessions on time management and life changes, and an overview of opportunities for student involvement on campus (Ward-Roof, Heaton, & Coburn, 2008).

As a student progresses to orientation and begins the processes of engaging with the institution, previous parental education is a factor that contributes to whether or not parents engage with a parent orientation session and as a result, how able the parents are to assist their student in understanding the resources and support available to them at the institution. Parent orientation is not only important to provide a component of transition for the family, it is also critical in aiding the parents in having a greater comprehension of the college student's experience (Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, & Jalomo, 1994). Ward-Roof, Heaton, and Coburn (2008) state that staff organizing orientation sessions need to look at the demographics of the students and families attending orientation when planning an appropriate schedule and even considering whether to hold parent orientation during the week or on a weekend. Students of lower socioeconomic status may come from families where parents cannot take off extra time during the week to attend an orientation. Students who are first-generation attending college may have parents who either have a greater interest in attending or who feel they lack the social capital to engage with college administrators. Parents who attended the same institution that their student has chosen may be more interested in touring and visiting their own memories as opposed to learning about college resources. As shown in these publications, parent orientation design is impacted by many factors including the socioeconomic status of the family, the parents' previous education or experience with the particular institution, and the cultural background of the family.

Parental Involvement in College Life/Processes

The research on parental contact with institutions of higher education during their student's college life is substantial and can be segmented into two categories. First is contact through channels established by the institution. Though there are holes in relation to the types of students and parents served by these programs, the proliferation of parents' councils, parent program offices, parent websites and newsletters, and parents' weekends or other activities for parents is a clear indication that parents are engaging with their student's institution and seeking to be informed (Ward-Roof, Heaton, & Coburn, 2008; Mullendore & Banahan, 2005; Jackson & Murphy, 2005). Again, however, this contact looks different depending on the student. Parents with no previous college experience and little social capital have less knowledge of and less contact with higher education administrators, and their students report receiving less support from their families while in college. Some students from underrepresented cultural backgrounds report, in fact, that their families are even unsupportive of their college experience because it is perceived to be taking the student away from the traditionally close relationships of the family unit or to be a sign of a desire for social mobility in a cultural context that may not value that aspiration (London, 1989). On the contrary, parents of higher socioeconomic status remain highly engaged with their student's college experience based upon their history of high investment in the life of their student and their perception of the high cost and high rewards of higher education, both in terms of future wealth potential and continued social mobility. Barnett (2004) reported that significant percentages of students believed that parental encouragement was critical to

remaining in college, but 84% of the students in that sample came from households with at least some parental college experience.

The second category of parental contact with institutions during their student's college life is channels initiated by the parents, often directly to faculty or staff in particular college units. These may be the types of contacts that lead to parents being labeled as "helicopters" and some examples were provided earlier in the section outlining the literature on parental involvement in higher education. Woollen (2005) provided additional examples such as editing assignments, contacting faculty to discuss grading, talking to advisors about course scheduling, and coming to campus to advocate for students at study abroad or career fairs. Conneely, Good, and Perryman (2001) discussed parental involvement in the context of residential life, where student satisfaction and persistence often hinges on connections with roommates. They outlined how student differences such as sexual orientation, racial or cultural differences, or divergent religious beliefs create situations in which parents initiate contact with the housing office, often preempting their student's attempts to manage the conflict themselves. Additional examples in the literature include the context of student conduct, where socioeconomics of the family and the cost of attending and finishing college can play a major role, (Galsky & Shotick, 2012) and in financial aid offices, where the family's socioeconomic status, potential job loss, and social capital are put center stage in interactions with the college (Lange & Stone, 2001). Flanagan (2006) provided an overview of student life topics most likely to precipitate contact from a parent, and included among these were

roommate conflicts, student conduct proceedings, academic progress, health concerns, and on-campus dining.

The familial factors impacting parental involvement in higher education are also illustrated through publications that do not specifically address a particular context. Pryor, Hurtado, Sharkness, and Korn (2008) conducted a study that showed differences by race in student perceptions related to appropriate levels of parental involvement. White students expressed greater satisfaction with the level of parental involvement as compared to students of color. Similar feelings of satisfaction with the level of parental involvement were documented by Ward-Roof, Page, and Lombardi (2010) who also noted differences by race. Price (2008) outlined the safety concerns of parents of African American students, especially when attending predominantly White institutions. Price also noted that parents of Hispanic students often face cultural and linguistic barriers in supporting their students in higher education.

Wartman and Savage (2008) cited the National Survey of Student Engagement to illustrate how mothers and fathers engage differently with sons and daughters regarding various issues related to higher education. They also discussed how parental involvement varies depending on factors such as level of socioeconomic status and ethnic and cultural factors involved in parenting. Another increasingly important factor in parental involvement is the age of the student. Enrollment of non-traditional students across the entire spectrum of higher education is increasing rapidly and though most data on parental involvement focuses on the traditional 18-22 year old college student, it is a safe

assumption that parental involvement looks different for students outside that demographic, some of whom may even be parents themselves.

An additional important consideration in regard to the approach parents are taking to higher education is that many (but not all) parents are more educated and more engaged than ever before. Sells (2002) detailed how previous experience with higher education impacts a parent's approach to seeking and gathering information about their student's institution. As the burden of paying for the rising costs of that education shifts more and more toward the families, parents of lower and middle class students are also more likely to be more highly involved due to the desire to ensure an appropriate return on their investment (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Increasing access to technology and instant communications are also trends that facilitate some parents' ability to be informed about campus events and establish contact with their student or appropriate campus offices, but this can also vary based on the cultural or socioeconomic status of the family (Wartman & Savage, 2008).

Parental involvement in higher education's annual college life / processes offers a broad range of contexts where parents can potentially interact with college staff and faculty. As a result, the types of factors that support or challenge that involvement are potentially more numerous. The research has shown that included in these factors are racial and cultural differences, socioeconomic differences, age and gender of the student, and previous educational attainment of the parents.

Parental Involvement in Study Abroad

The previous sections have outlined numerous examples of how a certain demographic of parents is involved with their student's higher education experience at a broad, general level and in specific components of higher education such as admissions, orientation, and various college life processes. What remains unsubstantiated, however, is whether or not the contacts between parents and the institution are sustained in the choice and experience of study abroad and what factors influence that relationship, boxes A and B in the conceptual model presented above. This section will begin to fill in those remaining open boxes in the model and provide the foundation for this research study.

The four studies of parental involvement in study abroad outlined above offer a starting point in identifying factors that are potentially correlated with higher levels of parental involvement in study abroad. The Hermann (1999) study indicated a clear correlation between parental involvement (in terms of communications and financial support) and age of the student (parents of traditional 18-22 year-old students showed higher measures of involvement which decreased with increasing age of the student) and presented data to support the idea that parental involvement was higher when the student was female. The parents in Parcells' (2010) study were also more likely to have previous international travel experience or previous experience with study abroad during their own college career. Paus and Robinson (2008) found no overall correlation between parents' previous college attendance and a student's decision to study abroad, but there was a correlation between previous parental college attendance and a student's decision to study abroad when the parents were from a higher socioeconomic status and their student was female. Both the Paus and Robinson study and that conducted by Chieffo (2000)

found that parental encouragement was an important factor in the decision to study abroad.

In addition to these studies, one can make some inferences about parental involvement in study abroad by combining the information above on general parental involvement with data on the demographics of study abroad. As noted above, study abroad was long the domain of the elite and wealthy. Approximately 73% of study abroad participants are white (Institute of International Education, 2016) and white students receive less financial aid for study abroad than almost any racial category of students (Stallman, Woodruff, Kasravi, & Comp, 2010). Finances continue to be a major barrier (perceived or real) for studying abroad, and this is especially true for students of color who are even more underrepresented in study abroad than they are in higher education in general. So it follows that students and parents of students who study abroad are more likely to represent higher income levels.

Additionally, Stallman et al. (2010) noted that a majority of study abroad students have historically come from families that were both wealthy and educated, and at least the education component of Stallman's argument is supported by data from the National Survey on Student Engagement (2007) which showed a positive correlation between students' likelihood to study abroad and the number of years of parental education. Wealth and education are two primary components of socioeconomic status (Oakes, 2012). If parents of higher socioeconomic status are more highly involved in higher education, as demonstrated above, and students in study abroad are more likely to come from families of higher socioeconomic status, it follows that students participating in

study abroad are more likely to have parents who are more heavily involved in the college experience. The study abroad literature has not yet, however, clearly demonstrated this connection between socioeconomic status and parental involvement.

Though the field of education abroad can fill the conceptual model's parent involvement conduit box (Box A in Figure 1) with examples of specific programmatic components that are being used to engage parents in the study abroad experience, questions remain as to their true level of involvement and the factors that might predict that involvement. Through review of the above higher education research, especially concerning parental involvement in other components of higher education, and the specific study abroad literature, especially the four identified studies of parental involvement in study abroad, six critical variables can be identified that may be valuable in an exploration of the model's box of factors supporting parental involvement in study abroad (Box B). These factors are socioeconomic status, previous parental education level, previous parental study abroad participation, previous family international travel/living experience, age of student, and gender of student. Before proceeding with those factors, however, there is value in a brief investigation of the interplay between socioeconomic status and previous parental education level.

There is no universal definition of socioeconomic status nor is there a direct and precise measurement of it. Social science researchers have been debating factors that should be included in measures of socioeconomic status for decades and have been debating just as long to try to determine useful ways to assess socioeconomic status (Oakes, 2012). While annual income is a widely-used proxy for the concept of

socioeconomic status, it has many faults as a tool in research, not least of which is that approximately 30% of survey respondents opt out of reporting annual income if given the choice, and when not given the choice the presence of a question seeking annual income can lead to lower response rates. No proxy measure is perfect, but educational attainment may be the best option available. Oakes (2012) states: "For those older than 25 years, educational attainment is an excellent proxy measure for SES" (p. 20). Given that the socioeconomic status in question in this proposed research is that of the students' parent(s) or guardian(s), which can all be assumed to be over 25 years of age, the two critical factors of socioeconomic status and previous parental/guardian education level will be combined and both assessed as a measure of previous parental education level.

These five remaining critical variables (previous parental education level, previous parental study abroad participation, previous family international travel/living experience, age of student, and gender of student) potentially play some role in the model as factors supporting parental involvement in study abroad (Box B). Discovering the nature of these factors' ability to predict parental involvement in the study abroad experience has real policy implications for both U.S. higher education and study abroad providers.

Research Questions

With the five potential critical factors of parental involvement identified, the research questions that will ultimately fill the open boxes of the conceptual model are beginning to take shape. Next, this study will identify the contextual aspects of study abroad in which those critical factors will be applied. The bodies of existing research on

parental involvement, study abroad, and parental involvement in study abroad provide a glimpse into the processes related to their student's study abroad experience where parents are most likely to engage. For example, research presented earlier indicates that parents are involved in initial institution selection as students prepare to matriculate, especially through the financial commitment to support campus visits. Can it be assumed, however, that these same parents are also involved in students' choices regarding study abroad program or destination? Data shows that parents maintain regular contact with their students during college, but does this indicate a likelihood of similar levels of contact maintained between students and parents during their international educational sojourn? Professionals within the field of study abroad have indicated an increase in the level of parental visits to their student's study abroad location (NAFSA 2007 National Conference, personal communications, June 2007), but is this a real phenomenon or just a highly visible but isolated occurrence? These questions and anecdotal reports provide some clues as to the specific contexts within study abroad where there is a need to generate real data on parental involvement. Each of these contextual aspects of study abroad will be expanded in the section below.

Relevant Contexts of Study Abroad

The five critical factors identified above that potentially impact parental involvement in study abroad will be investigated in relation to three different contexts of study abroad: students' choices regarding program or destination, continued connection and support during study abroad, and parental visits to the study abroad location. Each of these contexts will be briefly introduced starting with parental involvement in relation to

students' choices regarding program or destination. Numerous authors cited above (Coburn & Treeger, 2009; Wartman & Savage, 2008; Jacobson, 2003; Bolen, 2001) have addressed the role that parents play in the process of student selection of initial matriculation to an institution of higher education. Parcells (2010) and Hermann (1999) both demonstrated that parents are or at least desire to be involved in various processes surrounding their student's study abroad experience.

What remains unknown, however, is whether or not that involvement manifests through active participation in the process of selecting a study abroad destination or program. The unique study conducted by McKeown (2003) that was started before but completed after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks demonstrated a distinct difference in parental and student response to safety concerns surrounding study abroad. As similar terror attacks, natural disasters, and other international threats have continued in the years since, other researchers such as Merriman (2008), Carney-Hall (2008), and Sells (2002) have also documented how safety is the primary concern of parents of college students. Since there are clear perceptions (informed or not) in this country regarding the relative safety of certain parts of the world, an investigation of the degree of influence parents exert on the selection process of study abroad destination or program in relation to their perception of safety is appropriate.

A second intriguing contextual aspect of study abroad in which the hypothesized critical factors of parental involvement can be applied is the level of connection and support provided by parents to students during their time abroad, especially in relation to the idea of transitions. Historically, transition to a new context was discussed in relation

to culture shock, first described by Oberg (1960) as four stages of response to removal from one's familiar setting, from the honeymoon stage through crisis and recovery to adjustment. This stage model is now often referred to as the U-Curve of Cultural Adjustment (Thomas & Harrell, 1994), though there is ongoing debate as to this model's legitimacy (Lucas, 2009; Mikal, 2011). Social learning theory posits that students in study abroad programs are able to best navigate cross-cultural barriers through the development of social relationships with host individuals (Searle & Ward, 1990). However, Mikal (2011) offers a more comprehensive view of student transitions supported by internet connections to their home networks and enhanced integration into host cultures. This study, however, was small and focused only on one very highly connected Western European country. Therefore, to further explore this parental support connection idea, this research study will also investigate the frequency and manner of contact between parents and their students studying abroad to potentially lend support to Mikal's (2011) view of the use of internet communications by the current generation of students as a means of primary support through the transitional phase of going abroad.

Finally, this study will attempt to determine the prevalence of parental visits during study abroad and investigate the tendencies related to timing of those visits, (timed to coincide with the start of the student's program, during the middle of the program, at the end of the program, or not visiting at all). Study abroad administrators have begun to note an increase in the number of parents travelling with students as they initially arrive at a study abroad destination to help them settle into their new surroundings (NAFSA 2007 National Conference, personal communications, June 2007). Multiple authors have

indirectly alluded to this concept. For example, Savage (2003) noted that some parents are not completely content with a child's life transition until they can mentally picture the child's new environment. Savage further discussed that the transition to college is an important time of setting initial routines that lead to ultimate success or failure, an idea certainly applicable to the initial days of a study abroad experience. Hulstrand (2007) directly stated to parents that visiting at the onset of the program is not a good idea and instead offered thoughts on appropriate timing of such a visit. An exploration of parental visits could provide justification for the implementation of appropriate support systems for students during the critical transition phase of their study abroad experience.

These three focus areas within this study also offer tangible applicability related to implementation of subsequent positive policy initiatives. Researching parental involvement in student's study abroad selection process may furnish study abroad providers with a greater sense of the need to engage parents with information and resources to assist in that process. Determining the level and type of communications between parents and students abroad may also impact the decision made by some study abroad providers to limit or prohibit the use of social media or electronic communications during study abroad experiences. Data on the frequency and timing of parental visits during a student's study abroad could provide critical insights for on-site staff to work with those parents and provide students with better resources to prepare for and manage those visits. These are directly applicable outcomes of this research that could lead to practical improvements in aiding the implementation of positive and meaningful study abroad experiences.

Hypotheses

The above review identifies five potentially critical factors of parental involvement that will be tested for inclusion in the conceptual model's Box B (presented above in Figure 1). The literature review and professional experience have provided support for the three contexts of study abroad that will be addressed by this study as possible conduits of parental involvement in study abroad (conceptual model Box A). This model will frame the study to investigate the primary research questions: 1) To what extent are parents involved in the undergraduate study abroad experience of their children? 2) To what extent are various characteristics of parents and students related to that involvement? More specifically, combining the primary question with the three possible conduits of parental involvement outlined above, this research will examine the following subsidiary research questions:

1. To what extent are parents involved in the student's initial choice of study abroad program or destination and to what extent is that involvement related to selected parent and student characteristics?
2. What is the frequency and type of communication utilized by students with their parents during their study abroad experience?
3. What is the frequency and timing of parental visits to students before, during, or after the student's study abroad venture and what characteristics of parents and students are related to a greater frequency of parental visits?

These will be referred to hereafter as the three research sub-questions, and addressing each one in order will provide the framework for the outlining of research hypotheses, the data analysis, and the post-analysis discussion.

To create the hypotheses that will be tested in this study leading to the completion of the model, the three sub-questions above will be combined with the five potential factors supporting parental involvement derived from the study abroad literature (previous parental education level, previous parental study abroad participation, previous family international travel/living experience, age of student, and gender of student). The first sub-question yields the following hypotheses:

1(a). *Students whose parents have completed a college degree will report a higher level of parental involvement in the initial choice of study abroad program or destination as compared to students whose parents have not previously attended college*. Numerous studies above have linked parents' previous college attendance with higher levels of involvement in higher education, but as demonstrated by Paus and Robinson (2008) that link is not as clear in study abroad.

1(b). *Students whose parents have previously participated in a study abroad experience will report a higher level of parental involvement in the initial choice of study abroad program or destination as compared to students whose parents did not study abroad in college*, as found initially by Parcells (2010).

1(c). *Students who report extensive international family travel or living experience will report a higher level of parental involvement in the initial choice of study abroad program or destination as compared to students whose families have not*

extensively traveled or lived outside of their home country. This hypothesis is drawn from professional experience where study abroad administrators often assume previous travel or living experience equates to higher interest or involvement, which is supported by Parcells (2010).

1(d). *Students who are 25 years old or older will report a lower level of parental involvement in the initial choice of study abroad program or destination as compared to younger students*, as previously supported by Hermann (1999).

1(e). *Female students will report a higher level of parental involvement in the initial choice of study abroad program or destination as compared to male students*, as found by both Hermann (1999) and Paus and Robinson (2008).

The second sub-question yields the following hypotheses:

2(a). *Students whose parents have a higher level of education completed (as a proxy measure of a higher level of socioeconomic status) communicate more often with their parents throughout their study abroad experience as compared to students whose parents have lower levels of education completed*. This hypothesis tests both the widely held notion among higher education administrators that parents with previous college experience are more involved in their students' experience and the idea that parents of higher socioeconomic status are more involved in the daily lives of their college students (London, 1989; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

2(b). *Students whose parents have previously participated in a study abroad experience will report a higher frequency of communication with their parents*

throughout their study abroad experience as compared to students whose parents did not study abroad in college, as found by Parcells (2010).

2(c). *Students who report extensive international family travel or living experience will report a higher frequency of communication with their parents throughout their study abroad experience as compared to students whose families have not extensively traveled or lived outside of their home country*, as found by Parcells (2010).

The third subsidiary question yields the following hypotheses:

3(a). *Students whose parents have completed a college degree (as a proxy measure of a higher level of socioeconomic status) will report a higher frequency of parental visits to their study abroad program as compared to students whose parents have not completed a college degree*. This hypothesis, not previously explored in the documented research, seeks to explore whether or not socioeconomic status translates to the significant financial commitment of a visit to the student's study abroad site.

3(b). *Students whose parents have previously participated in a study abroad experience will report a higher frequency of parental visits to their study abroad program as compared to students whose parents did not study abroad in college*. Though intuitive, this hypothesis has not previously been tested by any of the studies noted above and it will explore to what extent the factors influencing parental involvement extend into study abroad.

3(c). *Students who report extensive international family travel or living experience will report a higher frequency of parental visits to their study abroad*

program as compared to students whose families have not extensively traveled or lived outside of their home country. Though intuitive, this hypothesis has not previously been tested by any of the studies noted above and it will explore to what extent the factors influencing parental involvement extend into study abroad.

These 11 hypotheses form the foundation for the implementation of this research study and their acceptance or rejection will provide discussion that will contribute to the international education field's understanding of and policy development around the complex intersection of parental involvement and study abroad programs. These questions will provide answers to the primary research questions: 1) To what extent are parents involved in the undergraduate study abroad experience of their children? 2) To what extent are various characteristics of parents and students related to that involvement?

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design

This research study was designed to illustrate what was happening at a single point in time. This design was appropriate given the scarcity of previous research on this topic as demonstrated above in the literature review. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) state "unless researchers first generate an accurate description of an educational phenomenon as it exists, they lack a firm basis for explaining or changing it" (p. 290).

Overview and Instrumentation

While there are many comprehensive surveys in use related to the undergraduate experience in U.S. higher education such as Cooperative Institutional Research Program surveys and the National Survey on Student Engagement, none specifically addresses the relationship between parents and student within the context of U.S. study abroad. As a result, a new survey instrument was created specifically for this exploratory study to analyze institutional the variables specific to the research questions outlined in the previous chapter.

The survey instrument had three sections designed to gather data to address the research questions (see Appendix A). Part One gathered institutional data related to the student and their chosen study abroad program. This data allowed the researcher to assess any variations in parental involvement across institutional differences such as type of home institution, size of home institution, type of institution or provider utilized for the study abroad experience, type of study abroad program, location of the study abroad

program, type of study abroad leadership, and length of study abroad experience. The definitions and categories within this section were governed by the standards of the international education field as outlined by the Forum on Education Abroad's Education Abroad Glossary, 2nd Edition (Forum on Education Abroad, 2011) and were the variables typically used by the international education field to classify study abroad programs.

Part Two questions were designed to determine the nature and quantity of parental involvement at selected points during the student's study abroad experience. These questions first focused on the level of parental involvement in the student's higher education experience prior to studying abroad including selection of institution, freshman orientation, and involvement with college life/processes. The next series of questions sought to ascertain the level of parental involvement within the student's study abroad experience, specifically: the initial decision to study abroad, the decision of where to study abroad (and concurrently through which institution or provider), the frequency and type of communications used by students and parents during study abroad, whether or not students sought advice or assistance from their parents before and during study abroad, and the decision related to whether or not and when the parents would visit the student at the program site during the study abroad experience.

Part Three of the instrument gathered data on parental involvement in study abroad based on the critical factors identified in the literature review: previous parental education level, previous parental study abroad participation, previous familial international travel/living experience, age of the student, and gender of the student.

The complete survey instrument is available in Appendix A and a listing of the institutional data variables, dependent parental involvement variables, and independent variables can be found in Table 1 below. The variables presented in this table represent the potential factors supporting parental involvement, Box B in the conceptual model presented in Figure 1, while the three contextual areas of study abroad (choice of program, frequency of communication, and prevalence of parental visits to study abroad) represent the conduits of parental involvement, Box A in that same model.

Table 1

List of variables

Institutional Data Variables	**Dependent Parental Involvement Variables**	**Independent Variables**
Type of home institution Size of home institution Type of study abroad program Location of program Type of study abroad provider Type of study abroad leadership Length of study abroad program	Parental involvement with previous higher education processes Parental involvement with the student's choice of study abroad program or destination Frequency and type of communication between student and parent during study abroad Parental visit to study abroad program site	Gender of student Age of student Previous parental education level Previous parental study abroad participation Previous familial international travel/living experience

Pilot Study

An exploratory pilot study was conducted in spring 2015 to identify concerns with the survey instrument and correct them prior to the full administration to the target audience. Results from this pilot study are not included in the final study results. The web-based survey instrument was administered to the 19 students enrolled in a domestic off-campus study program administered by a study abroad consortium office in a large,

urban city in the Midwest. The students in the pilot study attended 11 different colleges and universities across the Midwest. The students originated from nine different states across the United States and four other countries from North America, Africa, and Asia. The course included two sophomores, twelve juniors, and five seniors; six males and thirteen females; and a minimum of eight students who were known to represent a different race or ethnicity. This sample was likely to approximate the eventual sample of students in that they were all students who chose to incorporate off-campus study, though not at an international destination, in their academic career. Students in this program went through the same recruitment, application, and selection process through this off-campus study consortium as students who study abroad at international destinations.

Feedback was solicited from the students both electronically and in person regarding the ease of completion of the survey, understandability of the survey items, and the length of time required to complete the survey. The survey instrument was revised in accordance with this student feedback prior to administration with the complete sample.

Survey Administration

Survey data were collected over a period of four weeks in spring 2015 using Qualtrics, a secure electronic survey application available through the University of Minnesota. Potential participants were introduced to the study via an email sent from an administrator of their particular provider institution and the email included a direct link to the instrument (see Appendix B). This initial email included information regarding the confidential nature of their responses, instructions on how to complete the instrument, and information on contacting the researcher if necessary. All participants were sent an

email reminder two weeks after the initial email, again by an administrator from their particular provider institution (see Appendix C). Information regarding incentives for completing the survey (Visa or Target gift cards) was included in both messages.

At the completion of the survey administration, data was downloaded and individual identifying information (necessary only for the distribution of incentives) was separated from the responses. Both the data and the identifying information were stored on clean flash drives in a fireproof safe at all times that the data was not being accessed for analysis.

Sample

Over 97% of all U.S. undergraduate study abroad participants come from private and public four-year institutions (Institute of International Education, 2012), so the attention of this study was focused on those types of institutions. To try to represent the broad spectrum of institutions that send students abroad, the sample included undergraduate students who were enrolled in a study abroad program through one of three study abroad providing organizations. Two of these providing organizations were large public land-grant research universities that also serve as a study abroad provider for students at a number of other institutions. The third was a study abroad consortium comprised of 14 small, private liberal arts colleges and universities. Though all three of these organizations are based in urban locations within the Midwest, enrollees in their programs at the time of the survey spanned the gamut of origins: private and public institutions, urban and rural settings, very small to very large institutional sizes, and home campuses with very diverse to relatively homogenous student demographics.

The instrument was administered to all students who enrolled in a study abroad program at an international destination through any of those institutions during the months of January through May 2015. The population size was 1,938 students and the survey was sent to all members of the population who had an active, valid electronic mail address. By limiting the population to students who were currently enrolled, the study sought to eliminate the incidence of students receiving a survey invitation from multiple sources and also gather data only from current students or those with a recent recollection of their study abroad experience. The choice of January through May potentially enhanced the survey results because those months encapsulate a wider variety of types and lengths of programs including full-year, semester, January term, Spring Break, and May term programs.

Response Rates and Demographics

Table 2 contains the descriptive characteristics of the survey respondents. The total number of responses to the survey was 382, a response rate of 19.7%, and the number of students who completed the entire survey was 345. As expected with a sample of study abroad students, a large majority of the students were female (77%) and under 24 years of age (99%). Most respondents came from public universities (90%) that had large undergraduate student enrollments (87%). Most students had studied abroad in Europe (57%), which closely matched the 55% of all study abroad students who choose to study in Europe (Institute of International Education, 2016). A plurality of the respondents reported having traveled outside the United States once or twice before studying abroad but never living outside the U.S. (46%). In terms of previous parental

Table 2

Descriptive Characteristics of Survey Respondents (N = 345)

Variable	N	%
Type of home institution		
Public	309	89.6
Private	36	10.4
Enrollment of home institution		
Less than 2,000 students	20	5.8
2,000 – 10,000 students	25	7.2
More than 10,000 students	300	87.0
Location of study abroad program		
Asia	38	11.0
Australia or Oceania	18	5.2
Europe	198	57.4
Latin America, Central America, and Caribbean	60	17.4
Middle East and North Africa	7	1.9
North America	3	0.9
Sub-Saharan Africa	20	5.8
Multiple regions of the world	1	0.3
Program leader		
Directly led by faculty member from home campus	138	40.0
Led by someone other than faculty member from home campus	207	60.0
Length of program		
Short term (eight weeks or less)	119	34.5
Quarter or Semester (usually nine to seventeen weeks)	216	62.6
Two Quarters/Semesters or longer (eighteen weeks or more)	10	3.9
Gender		
Female	265	76.8
Male	76	22.0
Prefer not to answer	4	1.2
Age at time of study abroad participation		
24 years or younger	341	98.8
25 years or older	4	1.2

(continued)

Variable	N	%
Class standing at the start of the study abroad experience		
Freshman	60	17.4
Sophomore	67	19.4
Junior	171	49.6
Senior	46	13.3
Graduate student	1	0.3
Student's previous international travel or living experience		
Never before left the U.S.	55	15.9
Traveled outside U.S. once or twice but never lived abroad	160	46.4
Traveled outside U.S. thrice or more or lived abroad	130	37.7
Highest education level of most-educated parent		
High school or less	50	14.5
Associate's Degree	29	8.4
Bachelor's Degree	119	34.5
Graduate or Professional Degree	147	42.6
Previous parental study abroad experience		
Yes	58	16.8
No	287	83.2
Parent's previous international travel or living experience		
Never before left the U.S.	28	8.1
Traveled outside U.S. once or twice but never lived abroad	101	29.3
Traveled outside U.S. thrice or more or lived abroad	171	49.6
Born or raised outside the U.S.	45	13.0

study abroad, 83% reported no previous parental study abroad experience. Only four respondents indicated at the time of the study that their age was 25 years or older, so age of student was not considered in any of the subsequent analyses. All other demographic and institutional factors contained enough respondents to proceed.

Analysis

The data analysis began with examining and cleaning the data set to ensure all responses were recorded properly and only complete survey responses were included in the analysis. The responses to the survey were then input into the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to determine and report the measures of central tendency for the three sections of the survey. The demographics of the sample were compared to the general population of study abroad participants as outlined in the Open Doors report (Institute of International Education, 2012) to test representativeness of the sample and determine generalizability to the larger population. Variables tested were geographic region of program, gender, and class standing, and the sample was found to be representative of the general population in regard to these three variables. As a final step of the initial analysis related to the descriptive statistics, a Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed ranks test was used to determine the within-subjects differences between students' reports of parental involvement in higher education processes before study abroad and students' reports of parental involvement in their initial choice of study abroad program.

An initial correlation analysis was run to determine the relationship of two institutional variables, leadership of the student's study abroad program (faculty-led from home campus versus anyone else) and duration of the student's study abroad program (short term versus quarter/semester or longer). The results of chi-square test show a significant positive relationship ($\chi^2 = 208.15$, $p = .000$) between leadership and duration of the program (see Table 3), and an examination of the phi coefficient indicates it is a strong relationship. Because of the problem of multicollinearity caused by the strong

correlation between these two predictors, only duration of the program was used in the regression analyses for these two variables.

Table 3

Results of Chi-Square Test for Leadership and Duration of Study Abroad Program

	Duration of Program									
	Short term		Quarter/ Semester		Two Quarters/ Semesters+		Total			
Leadership	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	χ^2	*p*
Faculty-led, home campus	110	79.7%	27	19.6%	1	.7%	138	40	208.2	.000
Someone other than faculty from home campus	9	4.3%	189	91.3%	9	4.3%	207	60		
Total	119	34.5%	216	62.6%	10	2.9%	345	100%		

Phi coefficient = .78, *p* = .000
Variance predicted: 60.4%

Finally, the regression analyses were run in SPSS. For specific details on the coding and blocking used to run the regression analyses, please see Appendix D. Data for each of these three research sub-questions were examined to determine normality to ensure that regression analyses could be performed. The data related to parental involvement in the initial choice of student study abroad program or location were

significantly positively skewed, so a base 10 log transformation was performed on this data. The resulting distribution was tested again and met the criteria for normality. After the assumptions of normality were met, a linear regression model was run for each of the first two subsidiary research questions. Logistic regression was used for the third subsidiary research question due to the fact that the data for this question was nominal, solicited as a yes or no response.

Descriptive statistics and the results of the three regression analyses are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This chapter presents the descriptive and analytical results pertaining to parental involvement in U.S study abroad. Descriptive statistics will first be briefly presented followed by the results of the regression analyses on the three sub-questions of the study.

Descriptive Findings

The frequencies of responses on the five parental involvement measures are reported in Tables 4 and 5. These measures were: the extent of parental involvement in students' higher education experience prior to study abroad, the extent of parental involvement in the initial choice of study abroad program, the frequency of various types of communication methods during study abroad, the frequency of communication during study abroad, and parental visits to students during their study abroad experience.

Respondents were first asked to indicate to what extent their parents were involved in the processes of their higher education experience prior to study abroad. Preceding questions about their parents' involvement with earlier higher education processes such as admissions and new student orientation were used to prompt respondents' thinking about their parents' involvement and clarify the meaning of "prior higher education processes." The mean for parental involvement in higher education prior to study abroad was 3.28 on a six-point scale.

Respondents were then asked the extent to which their parents were involved in their initial choice of study abroad program or destination. Again, preceding questions

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Parental Involvement Measures (N = 345)

Scale	Number of respondents choosing each option							Mean	SD
Parental Involvement in Higher Education Prior to Study Abroad	1-Not at all 15	2 86	3 93	4 100	5 40	6-Very Heavily 11		3.28	1.18
Parental Involvement in Initial Choice of Study Abroad Program or Destination	119	92	71	53	9	1		2.26	1.18
Frequency of Communication with Parent(s) throughout Study Abroad Experience	1-Never 7	2 15	3 37	4 82	5 146	6 40	7-More than daily 18	4.56	1.23
Frequency of Use of Methods of Communication	1-Never	2	3	4	5	6-Daily or more			
Email	117	78	58	39	47	8		2.55	1.50
Cell phone	152	26	32	39	60	38		2.84	1.90
Landline phone	333	7	4	1	2	0		1.07	0.42
Texting	119	14	24	35	101	54		3.42	1.98
Twitter	332	6	3	3	2	1		1.10	0.53
Facebook	146	49	50	45	44	13		2.51	1.60
Instant Messaging	284	12	5	12	15	19		1.61	1.45
Video calls	106	40	85	80	34	2		2.72	1.39
Letters via regular mail	263	71	10	2	1	0		1.29	0.58

were used to prompt respondents' thinking about their parents' involvement in study abroad by asking about actions like deciding where and when to study abroad, thinking about financing, making general preparations for study abroad, and attending pre-departure orientation. The mean for parental involvement in initial choice of study abroad program or destination was 2.26 on a six-point scale.

The parental involvement means for higher education prior to study abroad and initial choice of study abroad program or destination were compared using the Wilcoxon signed ranks test. Findings indicate (see Table 5) that parents are less involved in study abroad program choice than in higher education processes prior to study abroad (z = -11.66; $p < .001$).

Table 5

Results of the Wilcoxon test for Parental Involvement in Study Abroad Compared to Prior Higher Education Processes (N = 345)

Variable	Mean	SD	*z*	*p*
Parental Involvement in Higher Education Processes prior to Study Abroad	3.28	1.18		
Parental Involvement in Study Abroad	2.26	1.18	-11.66***	.000

***$p < .001$

The frequency and methods of communication between respondents and their parents are reported in Table 4. Findings indicate that study abroad is not preventing parents and students from communicating regularly. Nearly 83% of students reported

communicating with parents at least once per week, and 17% reported communicating at least once per day. Additionally, 58% of the students in this survey reported that they specifically asked their parents for assistance during their study abroad experience.

Students indicated that the most frequent forms of communication used were texting, cell phones, video calls, email, and Facebook while the least frequent forms were landline phones, Twitter messages, letters sent via regular mail, and use of instant messaging. This data seems to indicate that communications between students and parents have progressed into the digital age, as evidenced by the lower use of letters and landline phones, but it also illustrates that there are clear preferences for certain types of electronic communications and certain formats are not as popular.

Table 6 provides descriptive statistics related to parental visits to students during their study abroad experience.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Parental Visits to Study Abroad Program Site

	N	%
Parental visits (N = 345)		
Yes	106	30.7
No	227	65.8
Program didn't allow parental visits	12	3.5
Timing of Visits (N = 106)		
Before or at the start of the program	7	6.6
During the program	67	63.2
After or at the end of the program	32	30.2

Regression Analyses

The descriptive statistics suggest that there may be less parental involvement in study abroad decision-making compared to other higher education experiences but that students and parents are regularly communicating during study abroad. Almost one-third of students report that their parent(s) are choosing to visit during the study abroad experience. Multiple regression was used to determine how characteristics of parents, students, and the study abroad program were related to these measures of parental involvement.

The summary of the regression analysis for the first sub-question regarding parental involvement in initial choice of study abroad program or location is presented in Table 7. The overall model showed statistical significance ($F = 3.55$, $p = .004$). The total percentage of variance in parental involvement in initial choice of study abroad program or location explained by the overall model is 8%.

Table 7

Summary of Regression Model for Parental Involvement in Initial Choice of Study Abroad Program or Location (N = 382)

Regression Model	R	R-square	F-change	Significance of F-change
Parent/Student variables	.17	.03	1.94	.09
Parent/Student variables +Institutional variables	.28	.08	3.55**	.004

**$p < .01$.

Parents are less involved in the decision-making regarding initial choice of study abroad program or location for students who participate in programs in Asia (β = -.18, *p* = .002) and in the Americas (β = -.19, *p* = .001) compared to students who participate in programs in Europe (see Table 8). None of the other parent or student variables were significantly related to student choice of study abroad program or location. Consequently, no support was found for any of the five hypotheses related to this sub-question.

The summary of the regression analysis for the second sub-question, regarding frequency of communication utilized by students with their parents throughout their study abroad experience, is reported in Table 9. The overall model showed a statistically significant F of 2.52 (*p* = .03). The total percentage of variance in parental frequency of communication during study abroad explained by the overall model is 7%.

Frequency of communication between parent and student during study abroad differed significantly by student gender and program duration (see Table 10). Parents are more likely to communicate more frequently with a female study abroad student as compared to a male student (β - .14, *p* = .01). Parents are also more likely to communicate more frequently with their student if the program is longer duration as compared to a short-term program (β = .15, *p* = .01). None of the other hypothesized parent or student variables were significantly related to frequency of communication, so no support was found for the three proposed hypotheses related to this sub-question.

The final regression investigated variables related to parental visits to their student's study abroad location. The Chi-square test of the full model (see Table 11) was

Table 8

Multiple Regression Analysis – Predictors of Parental Involvement in Initial Choice of Study Abroad Program or Location (N = 382)

Factor	β	*t*	*p*
Block one only			
Parent education	.04	.73	.47
Parent study abroad	-.10	-1.90	.06
Family travel	.04	.64	.52
Student travel	.03	.50	.62
Male student	.06	1.04	.30
Block one and two – Overall Model			
Parent education	.04	.73	.47
Parent study abroad	-.10	-1.90	.06
Family travel	.04	.64	.52
Student travel	.03	.50	.62
Male student	.06	1.04	.30
Private institution	.00	.04	.97
Location of program			
Q6_Asia	-.18	-3.14**	.002
Q6_America	-.19	-3.38**	.001
Q6_Other	-.08	-1.43	.16
Long duration program	-.03	-.54	.59

**$p < .01$.

Table 9

Summary of Regression Model for Frequency of Communication between Student and Parent(s) during Study Abroad (N = 382)

Regression Model	R	R-square	F-change	Significance of F-change
Parent/Student variables	.19	.04	2.61*	.03
Parent/Student variables +Institutional variables	.27	.07	2.52*	.03

*$p < .05$.

statistically significant (χ^2= 119.47, p = .000). Results indicated a moderate relationship between the variables and the prediction of parental visits.

Prevalence of parental visits to student study abroad locations differed significantly by previous parental study abroad, previous student travel, type of institution (public/private), location of study abroad site, and duration of the program (see Table 12). These results indicate that parents are more likely to visit their student in their study abroad location if the parents studied abroad during their own college experience (B = -1.57, p = .000) and if the student had significant international travel or living experience prior to studying abroad (B = .49, p = .05). Parents of students attending a public institution are more likely to visit their student during study abroad compared to parents of private school students (B = -1.69, p = .001). Parents are also more likely to visit their student if the student's program is one quarter/semester or longer (B = 2.57, p

Table 10

Multiple Regression Analysis – Predictors of Frequency of Communications between Student and Parent(s) during Study Abroad (N = 382)

Factor	β	*t*	*p*
Block one only			
Parent education	.06	1.14	.26
Parent study abroad	-.01	-.13	.90
Family travel	.06	.90	.37
Student travel	.01	.18	.86
Male student	-.16	3.02**	.003
Block one and two – Overall Model			
Parent education	.04	.68	.50
Parent study abroad	-.01	-.10	.92
Family travel	.07	1.10	.27
Student travel	-.01	-.06	.95
Male student	-.14	2.50*	.01
Private institution	-.02	-.36	.72
Location of program			
Q6_Asia	-.05	-.92	.36
Q6_America	-.10	-1.70	.09
Q6_Other	-.08	-1.41	.16
Long duration program	.15	2.57*	.01

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 11

Summary of Logistical Regression Model for Parental Visits to Student during Study Abroad (N = 382)

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Block one	Step	31.13***	5	.00
	Block	31.13***	5	.00
	Model	31.13***	5	.00
Nagelkerke's R-square: .12 Prediction success: 73.6				
Block two	Step	88.35***	5	.00
	Block	88.35***	5	.00
	Model	119.47***	10	.00
Nagelkerke's R-square: .42 Prediction success: 76.0				

***$p < .001$.

= .000). Finally, parents are less likely to visit if the student is participating in a program in Asia (B = -1.57, p = .004), North America, Latin America, South America or the Caribbean (B = -.88, p = .04), or other regions of the world (Antarctica, Australia/Oceania, Middle East/North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa) (B = -1.43, p = .004) as compared to students participating in programs in Europe. This analysis has

Table 12

Logistical Regression Analysis – Predictors of Parental Visits to Student Study Abroad Location (N = 382)

Factor	B	S.E.	Sig.
Block one only			
Parent education	.25	.13	.06
Parent study abroad	-1.02**	.30	.001
Family travel	-.20	.19	.29
Student travel	.51*	.21	.02
Male student	.60	.32	.06
Block one and two – Overall Model			
Parent education	.14	.16	.36
Parent study abroad	-1.57***	.40	.00
Family travel	-.14	.22	.52
Student travel	.49*	.25	.05
Male student	.27	.37	.47
Private institution	-1.69**	.53	.001
Location of program			
Q6_Asia	-1.57**	.54	.004
Q6_America	-.88*	.43	.04
Q6_Other	-1.43**	.49	.004
Long duration program	2.57***	.39	.00

*$p < 05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

found support for the hypothesis that students whose parents previously studied abroad during college will report a higher frequency of visits to their study abroad program as compared to students whose parents did not study abroad in college. No support was found for the hypothesis that students whose parents have completed a college degree will report a higher frequency of parental visits to their study abroad program or the hypothesis that students who report extensive international family travel or living experience will report a higher frequency of parental visits.

Summary

The analyses presented in this chapter explored the relationship between selected institutional variables, student/parent characteristics, and three measures of parental involvement in U.S. study abroad. Though the analytic data do not support many of the hypotheses offered above in relation to the literature review, there were statistically significant results for each of the three subsidiary questions in this study. The final chapter provides a discussion of these findings and outline implications for both practice and future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusions

"There is no research focusing specifically on parental involvement in study abroad and limited study abroad research mentioning parents" (Parcells, 2010, p. 3). Since Parcells wrote this statement, there has been negligible additional research published to add to the existing body of knowledge regarding parental involvement in U.S. study abroad. This study tested a set of initial propositions, supported by either previous studies or observations of practice, regarding the extent that parents are involved in the undergraduate study abroad experience of their children and how various characteristics of the parents and students are related to that involvement.

Overview of Study Design and Findings

This study found statistical evidence that parents are involved in study abroad program choice significantly less than they are in previous higher education processes. The analysis also indicated that parents are less involved in their student's initial choice of study abroad program for students who participate in programs in Asia and in the Americas compared to students who participate in programs in Europe. Analysis on frequency of communication between students and parents showed that parents are likely to communicate more frequently with a female study abroad student and less likely to communicate as frequently with their student if the student is participating in a short-term study abroad program. Parents were more likely to visit their student if the parents had studied abroad or if the student had significant international travel or living experience

prior to studying abroad. Parents of students attending a public (as opposed to private) institution are more likely to visit their student. Further, parents are more likely to visit their student if the study abroad program is one quarter/semester or longer. Finally, parents are less likely to visit if the student is participating in a program in Asia, North America, Latin America, South America or the Caribbean, or other regions of the world as compared to students participating in programs located in Europe.

Discussion

The most salient finding of the study is that parents are significantly less involved in the study abroad program choice process than they are in their student's other, previous higher education experiences. This finding was unexpected as it has not emerged as a part of previous research on the interactions between parental involvement and study abroad. While the finding should not serve to discount the many, sometimes challenging, interactions that study abroad professionals have with parents, these results demonstrate that the level of parental involvement in program choice simply does not rise to the same level as earlier higher education processes such as admissions and orientation. It may very well be true that interactions with parents during study abroad are more intense or difficult due to the geographic distance from the student and the perception of greater danger to students while abroad. It is also possible that, as a result of that intensity, study abroad professionals perceive that their interactions with parents are more frequent or more challenging.

The earlier literature review posited that there have been three phases in the history of parental involvement in higher education and, further, that the current phase is

one in which institutions attempt to anticipate student needs and manage situations to mitigate parental involvement. This study suggests a different perspective may be warranted. It may be time for a more nuanced approach that honors the support that parents and other home networks can provide. This would be consistent with the approach advocated by Mikal (2011) regarding the importance of parental involvement in aiding student transitions to study abroad locations.

This study supported the idea that the term "helicopter parent," as posited by Ward-Roof, Page, and Lombardi (2010), is perhaps an overused term. Large-scale data from sources such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (2007) indicate that students with frequent parental contact are at least as engaged as students with less frequent parental contact, if not more so, in high impact educational activities and self-report greater gains from attending higher education. Parental involvement does not seem to be impeding student engagement in higher education, nor does it seem to be hurting students' transition to study abroad (Mikal, 2011). Some authors are finally beginning to reject the term "helicopter parent" (Hofer, Thebodo, Meredith, Kaslow, & Saunders, 2016; White, 2014; Cutright, 2008) in favor of an approach that addresses parents as partners and helpers in the process of education and student development. While this study did not offer support for the value of parental involvement in study abroad, it did demonstrate that the level of parental involvement certainly is not equivalent to that seen in some other higher education processes. As a result, a blanket term such as "helicopter parents" should be more carefully and narrowly used in the future. It may not apply universally to study abroad.

In this study, five hypotheses pertained to initial choice of program or location and the particular characteristics of the students or parents. This study hypothesized that the extent of parental involvement in the initial choice of study abroad program or destination would be different based on parents' previous college experience (also a proxy for socioeconomic status), parents' collegiate study abroad experience, previous family international travel or living experience, students' age, and students' gender. None of these factors were significant predictors of difference in student choice of program or location.

What the study did demonstrate, however, is that the level of parental involvement in the initial choice of study abroad program or location does vary based on where the student chooses to study abroad. Parents are less involved in decision-making regarding program choice for students who participate in programs in Asia and in the Americas compared to students who participate in programs in Europe. Though the question did not explore the reasons behind these differences, it is quite possible that parents are not as involved in the choice of programs in Asia simply because parents may not be as familiar with the cultures, educational systems, and geography of Asia. However, this does not fully explain the similar findings for the Americas, and if those were the causes of the difference, one might also expect to see similar differences for study abroad in Africa or other regions of the world. It is possible that the differences in parental involvement for choice of a program in the Americas is somewhat the opposite – a perception among parents that programs in the western hemisphere are closer, safer, and/or more familiar, thus leading parents to a more hands-off approach to this choice.

This is a potentially valuable discovery for those study abroad offices that allocate their staff based on geographic regions of the world.

The findings in this study lend support to some previous research. The Mount Holyoke study (Paus & Robinson, 2008) also found no connection between parents' college attendance and their students' likelihood to study abroad, so perhaps first generation college students are just as likely to study abroad as the children of college graduates. This study also lends support to the Hermann (1999) finding that less than one-third of students reported their parents to be very or somewhat involved in the decision to study abroad. Again, perhaps parental involvement is not a critical component within initial student choice of study abroad.

Results from this study also contradicted some results from previous research. Chieffo (2000) had found that, among students who had decided to study abroad, parental support was important for more than half of the students. Chieffo's study utilized a metric of encouragement pertaining to students' support networks that cannot be exactly compared with the parental involvement measure in this study. However, respondents in this study reported parental involvement in the choice to study abroad at a much lower rate than the 52% cited in her study. Additionally, as this study used parents' previous college attendance as a proxy for socioeconomic status, the findings do not provide support for Paus and Robinson's (2008) finding that high income parents with previous college attendance show greater engagement with study abroad decision-making. Finally, the study could not verify Hermann's (1999) claim of differences in parental involvement

based on the age of the student as this survey did not draw a broad enough sample of students over 25.

The second sub-question hypothesized that the extent to which parents and students maintained communication during study abroad would differ based on parents' previous college experience (also a proxy for socioeconomic status), parents' collegiate study abroad experience, and previous family international travel or living experience. None of these specific factors were significant predictors of frequency of communication between parents and students.

Two variables did demonstrate significant differences in parent to student communication during study abroad. Female students reported statistically higher rates of communication with their parents compared to their male counterparts. It is not clear if this result is related to Hermann's (1999) finding that parents of female students expressed higher levels of concerns for safety in the study abroad experience as compared to the parents of male students, or if perhaps parents naturally communicate more with female college students overall as compared to male students. One possibility is that female students are more communicative than male students, but this is the first study that explored student communication with parents during study abroad, so without further research, the actual reasons behind the finding cannot yet be ascertained.

The second finding regarding communications was that parents were less likely to communicate with their student if the student was participating in a short-term study abroad program, defined as eight weeks or less in duration. This seems intuitively reasonable. On longer programs, there is both a greater time frame of separation and the

ability to set routines in communication that simply may not exist in shorter term programs. Some study abroad programs are as short as one week or ten days, and within that time the program may either be too intense in nature for students to find time to communicate with parents or the students and parents may simply determine that the absence is too short and the challenges of communication too great to establish plans or patterns to communicate more often. Also, given that the use of cell phones and texting are among the most preferred methods of communication during study abroad, it is also quite possible that short-term programs mean less frequent communication because the student (or parents) might not deem it necessary for that short time frame to pay the costs to get international calling or data plans enabled on the student's phone if the feature is not already activated. As a result of these factors, the less frequent communication may be explained by reasons other than a desire to maintain the same levels of regular communication.

In terms of this study's relationship to previous research on parental involvement in study abroad, there are limited conclusions that can be drawn since none of the four previous studies noted in the literature review explored the frequency or type of communication between students and parents during study abroad. As mentioned above, Hermann's (1999) study had also found gender differences (a higher level of parental involvement for female students), but that is the only connection to be drawn to previous studies.

The frequency of communication between parents and students during study abroad and the finding that students are specifically asking their parents for assistance

potentially lends some support to Hermann's (1999) assertion that parents are the primary resource that students turn to for support. These findings also provide some support to Mikal's (2011) study on the importance of connections with parents as a part of the support network that students need during their initial transition to their study abroad location. However, this study did not ascertain if there are others (i.e. friends, significant others, faculty members) with whom students communicate more frequently than parents.

The final research question focused on the prevalence and timing of parental visits to students during study abroad, a question that had not been addressed in previous research, but which has received much anecdotal discussion among practitioners in the field of study abroad. Similar to the previous questions, three hypotheses had linked frequency of parental visits to characteristics of the students or parents. This study had posited that the extent to which parents chose to visit their student during the study abroad experience would differ based on parents' previous college experience (also a proxy for socioeconomic status), parents' collegiate study abroad experience, and previous family international travel or living experience. Analysis showed a significant connection between parents' collegiate study abroad experience and the prevalence of parental visits to their student's study abroad location. Though instructive, this finding is not particularly surprising as it may be explained as a "legacy effect" by which parents seek to re-create, re-experience, or simply remember their own study abroad experience through the lens of their student's current experience.

Also interesting about this finding is that previous parental study abroad experience was significant but previous family travel experience was not. This suggests

that it took more than just previous family travel experience to get parents to visit their student's study abroad location. The additional factor of having had a study abroad experience themselves more significantly led parents to visit the student's study abroad location. Unfortunately, the survey did not explore whether the parental study abroad experience was in the same region or location as the student's program so that we could demonstrate how much of this effect was explained by an interest in re-visiting their own experience.

Four additional variables showed a significant relationship with parental visits to their student's study abroad location. The first of these was previous student travel, which is again a very intriguing finding given that previous family travel was not significant. One could potentially assume that parents were more likely to visit the study abroad location if the student had previous travel experience because it is possible the student had traveled before but the family had not and the study abroad experience was an opportunity for the family to travel internationally for the first time by visiting the student. This possibility would be supported by the finding that previous family travel was not significant in the decision for parents to visit, but cannot be confirmed by the survey results of this study.

The type of institution in which the student was enrolled at the time of study abroad was another significant variable in parental visits to study abroad locations. Parents of public institution students were significantly more likely to visit their student as compared to parents of private school students. This may be a somewhat surprising result if one accepts assumptions that are usually made about the income of families who

attend private schools, but the results may be more complicated than that. First, the study was skewed in terms of the demographics of the sample. More public school students were included in the sample and the responses reflected that bias. Additionally, the public school students were drawn from two large, research institutions with known reputations for success in international education. It is possible these institutions devote greater resources to study abroad, thus reducing the cost to the student and freeing up more family resources for the parental visits. It is also true that the private school consortium from which the sample drew responses is comprised of schools that operate on a wide continuum of cost, resources, and international focus, so we cannot assume that all students studying abroad from those institutions come from a higher socioeconomic status or have the resources to travel. This question demands more research to further explore the reasons underlying the difference in parental visits by institutional type.

The third variable that showed a significant relationship with parental visits to study abroad is the location of the student's program, and the findings indicated that parents are more likely to visit their student if the study abroad program is in Europe as compared to any other region of the world. This is not particularly surprising given that Europe is the second preferred travel region in the world for U.S. travelers behind North America (defined in this case as only Canada and Mexico) (National Travel & Tourism Office, 2016). Parents may very well choose not to visit their student during study abroad in North America to the same level they are willing to visit Europe simply because they may assume it is easier to travel within North America anytime they want or they may have already traveled to Mexico, for instance, since it is the top destination for U.S.

citizens' international travel (National Travel & Tourism Office, 2016). Europe, however, has the attractions of being historical, culturally intriguing, and for some parents out of reach without the excuse of a student to visit or without the assistance of their student as a tour guide. Perhaps Europe is too far away for an independent visit, but the presence of a student in Europe provides just enough reason to make the trip. Whatever the reason, visits to study abroad in Europe are more prevalent than any other location around the world.

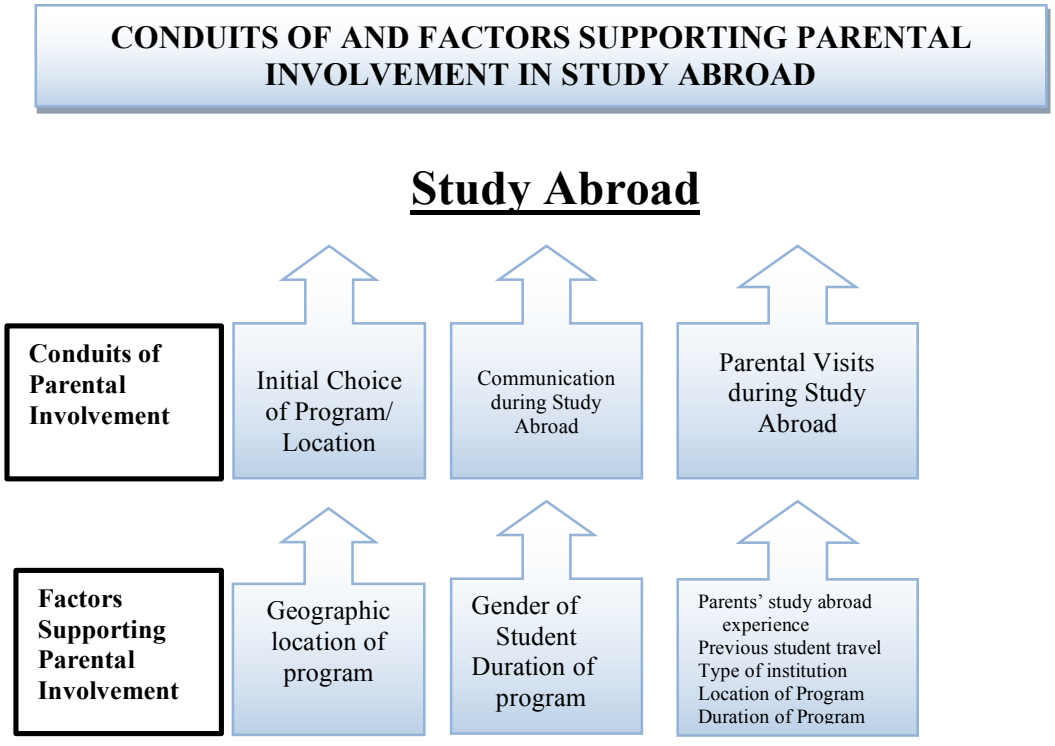
Finally, duration of the student's program also demonstrated a significant relationship with parental visits to their student's study abroad location. Parents are more likely to visit their student if the student's program is one quarter/semester or longer. Similar to the findings on frequency of communication during study abroad, higher levels of parental visits to longer programs is simply logical based on the length of time abroad. Short-term programs are more likely to be faculty-led programs with pre-arranged group flights, and long-term programs are more likely to have break periods during the term that allow for independent travel. This difference may be more about the opportunity to visit during that program rather than any difference in the motivation of the parents to visit during a longer program. From the motivation standpoint, however, longer absences may lead to greater motivation for parents to visit and thus break down the longer period of being away from their child. Additionally, those parents who have not previously traveled may view their student being gone for a longer period of time as an opportunity to take advantage of the knowledge gained by their student by having them serve as a de facto tour guide for the parental visit.

From the descriptive statistics pertaining to the third subsidiary research question, it is very interesting to note that 63% of those parents who did choose to visit their student during study abroad did so during the program dates. Most study abroad providers, if they address the topic at all, recommend parents visit after the completion of the program. However, it is difficult to know from the survey data if those who visited during the program timed their visit to coincide with an academic break, if one existed in the program schedule. This raises the question of whether study abroad may still be viewed by some, parents and students alike, as an opportunity more weighted toward tourism than academics. Without knowing the specific schedules of the programs involved and the distinct timing of these parental visits, it is difficult to judge how the visits may have impacted the student's academic experience.

There are limited connections that can be drawn between the findings of this study pertaining to parental visits to their student's study abroad location and the previous body of research since none of the previous studies addressed this topic specifically. Again, parallels can be drawn to the Hermann (1999) study's assertion regarding parents as the primary resource for student support during study abroad and the Mikal (2011) study on the importance of connections with parents, but it is also just as likely that the reason for parental visits to study abroad locations has more to do with a vacation for the parents than providing support for their student. More research is necessary to explore the motivations behind these visits. At the very least, these results demonstrate that parental visits are more than the anecdotal story-telling of study abroad professionals.

The findings outlined above provide an initial framework for understanding how parental involvement in study abroad actually flows through the conceptual model presented in chapter two (see Figure 2). While acknowledging the importance of the finding that parental involvement in study abroad exists to a lesser extent than parental involvement in other aspects of their student's higher education experience, the conduits of parental involvement identified in this study (involvement in initial choice of program, frequency of communication during study abroad, and parental visits during study abroad) were all shown to have significant relationships that could contribute to predictions of parental involvement.

Figure 2: Framework for Understanding Parental Involvement in Study Abroad



Source: Author

Implications for Theory and Practice

There is no reason to believe that parental involvement in higher education will decline anytime soon. This study, however, provides initial evidence that perhaps parental involvement is not consistent across students' higher education experiences. This study clearly indicates that parents are less involved in study abroad selection than they are in previous higher education experiences such as admissions and new student orientation. Perhaps these findings suggest that study abroad providers should decrease the resources they devote to parents in the recruiting and orientation phase of study abroad decision-making and focus more on how offices can work with parents to support students during the transition to and throughout their study abroad experience. Hofer, Thebodo, Meredith, Kaslow, and Saunders (2016) advocated the importance of providing better education and training to parents on how to interact with their student during study abroad, and that idea is supported by the findings of this study.

Consider that nearly half of the students in this study indicated they had been outside the United States only once or twice, and 16% of respondents indicated that they had never before traveled internationally. Additionally, only 17% of respondents reported that either of their parents had previous study abroad experience. Together these findings highlight potential gaps in the existing knowledge base of students and parents pertaining to international travel and study abroad. Studies cited above have indicated (Hermann, 1999; Savage, 2003; Mikal, 2011), parents are still seen as a primary support for students during study abroad, if not *the* primary support. Perhaps more needs to be done by study

abroad offices to prepare parents to support the adjustments and challenges their students will face during their study abroad experience.

While parents may be less involved in study abroad as compared to other higher education processes, the data still indicated that students view their parents as part of a primary support network during study abroad. Study abroad professionals and offices should seek to capitalize on this relationship instead of relying on anecdotes, stereotypes, and isolated case studies of extreme parental involvement to guide their parental interactions. Practitioners should not assume that all of this contact between parents and students comes from the same motivations, and certainly must also be careful about assuming that all of this contact falls into the narrative created in the popular media about helicopter parenting.

Study abroad offices and professionals can use the results contained in this study to think differently about preparing students for successful study abroad experiences. For example, knowing that parents are more likely to be involved in the initial choice of study abroad program or destination based on the location of that choice gives practitioners the opportunity to re-design informational materials, applications, and presentations to offer more of the information that is pertinent to parents (i.e. cost, safety, on-site support) as a part of that process. Furthermore, understanding the realities of parental visits to study abroad programs can help practitioners guide students and parents with messaging that sets clear expectations around when, where, and how parents can or should visit their student. Finally, when practitioners understand the population of students coming to study abroad, they are better able to serve those students by tailoring messages to fit the

particular needs of the students. Knowing, for instance, the high percentage of study abroad students who are first-generation study abroad can help practitioners avoid the trap of assuming that, just because they work in the study abroad field every day, everyone they work with and interact with understands the context of study abroad in the same way they do. There are many opportunities for professional development training regarding the nature of study abroad students and their interactions with their parents that follow directly from the results of this study.

Trends in study abroad continue to move in the direction of an expansion of opportunities, access, and participation. There are real implications that may result from these trends and significant investment and infrastructure will need to be put in place to accommodate this potential growth of study abroad. This investment must be done wisely and with greater knowledge of what is really happening with parents, a key stakeholder in study abroad. Insights gained from this investigation can inform study abroad practitioners on how to best adapt policies and practice to enhance the educational benefits and experience of future generations of study abroad participants and their parents.

Limitations of the Study

The outcomes of this study should be measured against some limitations. First, though the study sought to increase generalizability by including study abroad participants from multiple sending institutions and providers, the reality was that the sample was heavily weighted toward participants from large, public, research institutions. While one of the three sending institutions was a consortium of small, private, liberal arts

colleges, the number of students that organization sends abroad simply could not counterbalance the number of students from the two other organizations. As a result, the sample is comprised of almost 90% students from public institutions, which is higher than their representation in actual study abroad numbers. As a result, care should be taken when applying the results of this study to smaller institutions or organizations.

A second limitation is the self-reported nature of the data and the lack of a concurrent survey of parents to cross-examine results with those provided by the students. This information would have been particularly helpful as the study explored the level of parental involvement in initial study abroad program or location and in getting more detail about the motivation and timing of parental visits to study abroad students. This limitation was accepted early in the design process due to both the difficulty of matching student and parent responses but also due to potential challenges with privacy laws and obtaining accurate contact information for parents.

A third limitation pertains to the definition of student age that was used in the survey. Previous literature, especially the Hermann (1999) study, had identified differences in parental involvement based on the age of the student. However, that study simply noted that students who identified as 25 years of age or older tended to seek less parental involvement in their higher education experiences. As a result of that finding, this survey asked students only to identify themselves as 24 and younger or 25 and older. This was an unfortunate design decision that made examining data by broader age ranges impossible. As a result of the fact that so few of the students in this sample identified as

25 and older, this demographic measure became useless in the data analysis, and class standing was not viewed as a valid substitution for age.

A final limitation to this study was the fact that respondents were asked to respond to questions across an inconsistent time frame. For some of the respondents, the survey was received after the completion of their program and once they had already returned home. This applies more heavily to students who participated in short-term, faculty-led programs. For others, they received and completed the survey while they were still abroad in the middle of their experience, and this group was more heavily the long-term study abroad participants. While some respondents were therefore asked to recall things that had previously happened, others were answering from a current or potentially even future perspective. This may have impacted the accuracy of some of the responses.

Directions for Future Research

The analysis resulting from this study offers potentially rich subject material for grounding future research topics. For example, parental involvement in students' transition to their study abroad location is merely a small component of Mikal's (2011) study on social support via online connections. Knowing more about frequency and types of communications between students and parents provides a foundation for a greater exploration of the importance of internet connectivity in study abroad, which could impact providers' decisions to enhance or ban internet connections for students during programs. This could be enhanced by a study that specifically addresses students' use of electronic resources as a part of their transitional support and examines this with a lens toward gender differences. Additionally, such research should attempt to ascertain the

extent to which students are communicating with others (non-parents) in their support network to assist with the transition to a study abroad environment. While this study explored the frequency of communication with parents, the survey did not gather any data that would allow for an examination of whether the communication between parents and students is primary or secondary to the students' support needs.

Another future research area that is supported by this data is the influence of parents on the cultural adjustment for students going abroad and returning home. Shannon (1995) provided a good framework for how students can create themselves anew in an education abroad setting through intentional reflection, midpoint assessments, and their approach to re-entry but the impact of students' connections to parents as a part of that reflection or re-entry is missing. Authors such as Lucas (2009), Hulstrand (2007), Savage (2003), and Hoffa (1998) have all provided some background on cultural adjustment as part of the study abroad experience. Other researchers have documented that support from parents is important to student development (Cullaty, 2011), students quite often initiate contact and welcome parental assistance (Taub, 2008; Carney-Hall, 2008), and that students are generally happy with the levels of involvement their parents have in the higher education career (Ward-Roof, Page, & Lombardi, 2010). Future research in this area might focus on the impact of parental involvement on student development gains of study abroad students, the actions that parents take to attempt to mitigate the impact of culture shock or reverse culture shock on their student, and the perceived success of those efforts from the perspective of the student.

A third potential area of research that could be supported by this project is the congruence of students' and parents' perceptions of parental involvement in study abroad, a topic unexplored by Parcells (2010) and one that needs a more recent exploration than that offered by Hermann (1999). This study did not seek to explore correlations between parental perspectives and those of their student, but a study that does could potentially discover more about motivations for family visits during study abroad and explore differences between the intensity of parental involvement in study abroad as compared to involvement in previous higher education processes like admissions and new student orientation.

Finally, additional research is warranted to try to determine why practitioners in the field of study abroad perceive parental involvement to be such a critical topic when this study shows parents are less involved in study abroad choice than they are in other higher education processes. Regarding family visits, new studies could seek to explore the differences found here between public and private school parents' prevalence of visits and also to determine the specific timing of family visits during programs to discover more about the tourism versus academic focus question of these visits. There is also a potentially rich research agenda available to anyone who would seek to explore the idea of first generation study abroad students.

Conclusion

A return to the doctrine of *in loco parentis* does not seem likely within the context of current U.S. higher education. If we assume that parents are going to continue to be a key stakeholder in at least the near future, higher education institutions and study abroad

providers will need to continue to plan for their involvement, conceivably less as an annoyance to manage but rather as a tool to leverage. Student success in study abroad is every practitioner's goal, and if parental involvement can be channeled to support that success, perhaps the diminishing resources of higher education can be stretched to better serve the expected higher populations seeking study abroad experiences in the future.

This study has illustrated that parental involvement in study abroad choice is not as prevalent as parental involvement in other aspects of students' higher education experience. Undoubtedly, helicopter parents do exist in study abroad as they do in other areas of higher education, but study abroad practitioners can perhaps work a bit easier knowing there is less hovering over their offices. More research is needed to clarify the helping and support roles that parents or other support networks provide to study abroad students.

While parents may not be as heavily involved in the initial choice of study abroad program or destination, they remain an active component of their student's network through frequent communication links and visits to their student during study abroad. This research has provided new insights into the relatively unexplored confluence of parental involvement in study abroad while opening paths to new research opportunities and providing substantive implications for practitioners to maximize their parental interactions.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument

PART ONE: INSTITUTIONAL/PROGRAM DATA

Instructions: For each question, please select the response that best reflects your experience related to your current (or most recent) study abroad experience.

i. My home institution is:
   a. Public
   b. Private

ii. My home institution is:
   a. A community college or two year institution granting Associate's degrees
   b. A four year institution granting Bachelor's degrees
   c. A four year institution granting Master's degrees
   d. A four year institution granting Doctorate degrees
   e. A Tribal college

iii. My home institution has how many undergraduate students enrolled?
   a. Less than 2,000 students
   b. 2,000 – 10,000 students
   c. More than 10,000 students

iv. My study abroad program is/was
   a. A field study program (mainly experiential study outside the classroom setting)
   b. Integrated university study (enrollment in regular courses at a host institution)

c. An overseas branch campus (a separate campus of a U.S. institution in a different country)

d. A study abroad center (classroom-based courses designed and offered specifically for non-host country students)

e. A travel seminar (a program involving travel and instruction in many different cities perhaps around a designated, unifying topic)

v. My study abroad program is/was located in:

a. Antarctica

b. Asia

c. Australia or Oceania

d. Europe

e. Latin America, South America, & Caribbean

f. Middle East & North Africa

g. North America

h. Sub-Saharan Africa

i. Multiple regions of the world

vi. The study abroad program which I am attending/attended is/was run by:

a. My home institution

b. A different college / university

c. A private study abroad provider

vii. My study abroad program is/was:

a. directly led by a faculty member from my home campus

b. led by someone other than a faculty member from my home campus

viii. My study abroad program is/was:

a. Short term (eight weeks or less)

b. Quarter or Semester (usually nine to seventeen weeks)

c. Two Quarters/Semesters or longer (usually eighteen weeks or more)

PART TWO: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Instructions: For each question, please select the response that best reflects your experience related to your current (or most recent) study abroad experience. Please note that on scales, higher numbers indicate higher frequency.

ix. To what extent were your parent(s)/guardian(s) involved with:

(select one response for each)

1 = not at all 2 = a limited extent 3 = actively 4 = completely

a. Your decision of where to attend college/university 1 2 3 4

b. Your initial higher education orientation program 1 2 3 4

c. Your housing/residential life experience 1 2 3 4

x. Overall, to what extent were your parent(s)/guardian(s) involved in your higher education experience prior to your study abroad experience?

1 = not at all

2 = very little involvement

3 = somewhat involved

4 = moderately involved

5 = heavily involved

6 = they were very frequently involved in most aspects of my higher education experience

xi. In relation to your current study abroad experience, to what extent are/were your parent(s)/guardian(s) involved with:

(select one response for each)

1 = not at all	2 = a limited extent	3 = actively	4 = completely

a. Your decision to study abroad	1	2	3	4
b. Your decision of where to study abroad	1	2	3	4
c. Your decision of when to study abroad	1	2	3	4
d. Your decision of through which specific program to study abroad	1	2	3	4
e. Exploring the financial implications of study abroad	1	2	3	4
f. Pre-departure orientation related to your program	1	2	3	4
g. Your general preparations to study abroad	1	2	3	4

xii. Did you specifically ask your parent(s) for assistance related to your study abroad plan in advance of your study abroad experience?

a. Yes

b. No

xiii. Overall, to what extent were your parent(s)/guardian(s) involved in your initial choice of study abroad program or destination?

1 = not at all

2 = very little involvement

3 = somewhat involved

4 = moderately involved

5 = heavily involved

6 = my parent(s)/guardian(s) selected my program

xiv. Did your initial choice of study abroad program or destination change specifically due to the influence of one or more of your parent(s)/guardian(s)?

a. Yes

b. No

xv. How often did/do you use the following methods for keeping in touch with your parent(s)/guardian(s) during your study abroad experience? (Report the device YOU used, regardless of what your parent(s)/guardian(s) used)

1 = never 2 = less than once per month 3 = less than once per week

4 = more than once per week but not every day 5 = daily

a. Email	1	2	3	4	5
b. Cell phone	1	2	3	4	5
c. Landline phone	1	2	3	4	5
d. Texting	1	2	3	4	5
e. Twitter	1	2	3	4	5
f. Instant Messenging (i.e. AIM, Google chat)	1	2	3	4	5
g. Video Calls (i.e. Skype, iChat, Facetime)	1	2	3	4	5
h. Letters sent via regular mail	1	2	3	4	5

xvi. Did you specifically ask your parent(s) for assistance of any kind during your study abroad experience?

a. Yes

b. No

xvii. Overall, to what extent do/did you communicate with your parent(s)/guardian(s) throughout your study abroad experience?

1 = never

2 = less than once per month

3 = less than once per week

4 = more than once per week but not every day

5 = once per day

6 = more than once per day

xviii. Did your parent(s)/guardian(s) visit you (or do they yet plan to visit you) at your study abroad program site or in the region of your study abroad program site in conjunction with your time abroad?

a. Yes

b. No (skip to question xix)

c. My program prohibited parental visits (skip to question xix)

xix. Which time frame best describes this visit?

a. Before or at the start of the program

b. During the program

c. After or at the end of the program

d. My parent(s)/guardian(s) did/will not visit in conjunction with my program.

xx. Which of the following best describes the decision-making process regarding the visit of your parent(s) at your study abroad program site or region?

a. My parent(s) initiated the idea of visiting me

b. I initiated the idea of my parent(s) visiting me

c. I don't recall who initiated the idea of the visit

PART THREE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Instructions: Please select the best response for each question.

xxi. What is your gender?

a. Female

b. Male

c. Neither of the options above apply to me

d. I prefer not to answer

xxii. What was your age at the start of your study abroad experience?

a. 24 or younger

b. 25 or older

xxiii. What was your academic class standing at the start of your study abroad experience?

a. Freshman

b. Sophomore

c. Junior

d. Senior

e. Graduate student

xxiv. Select the answer that best describes your level of international travel or living experience prior to your study abroad experience:

a. I had never before left the United States

b. I had travelled outside the United States once or twice before studying abroad BUT I had never before lived outside the United States

c. I had travelled outside the United States three or more times before studying abroad OR I had lived outside the United States before studying abroad

xxv. What is the highest level of education completed by your most educated parent/guardian?

a. High school or less

b. Associate's Degree

c. Bachelor's Degree

d. A Graduate or Professional Degree

xxvi. Did any of your parent(s)/guardian(s) study abroad as a student in higher education?

a. Yes

b. No

c. I don't know

xxvii. Select the answer that best describes the level of international travel or living experience undertaken by your most traveled parent(s)/guardian(s) prior to your study abroad experience:

a. Never before left the United States
b. Travelled outside the United States once or twice before I studied abroad BUT had never lived outside the United States before I studied abroad
c. Travelled outside the United States three or more times before I studied abroad OR had lived outside the United States before I studied abroad
d. Born or raised outside the United States

xxviii. If you are interested in being entered in the drawing for one of the gift cards, please provide your email address:

Thank you for your participation in this survey!

APPENDIX B

Introductory Email

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Study Abroad Survey

Dear (insert student name),

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to explore parental involvement in the experience of U.S. students studying abroad. Your responses will contribute valuable insights to future development in the important field of study abroad. This study is being conducted as a part of a Ph.D. dissertation by a student in Higher Education at the University of Minnesota with oversight from a faculty advisory board.

Your participation is very easy and if you complete the survey, you may choose to be entered into a drawing to win one of two $100 appreciation gifts (Visa or Target gift card). Chances of winning depend upon the number of responses received.

To participate in this study:

a. Click on this link or paste it into an internet browser: (xx)
b. Follow the instructions to start the survey
c. Click submit once you have completed the questions

The survey will take about 10 minutes. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from participation at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not impact your relationship with your home institution or your study abroad program in any way.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Your identifying information will be separated from your responses and will be used only for the purposes of contacting you if you are selected as a recipient of one of the gifts.

If you have any questions or require any technical assistance will this survey, please contact Kevin L. Dostal Dauer at kdostaldauer@gmail.com.

Thank you for your participation,
XXX

APPENDIX C

Survey Reminder Email

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Study Abroad Survey

Dear (insert student name),

Previously we sent you a message inviting you to participate in a research study designed to explore parental involvement in the experience of U.S. students studying abroad. If you have already completed this survey, we thank you very kindly for your input.

If you have not yet completed the survey, you still have a chance to contribute valuable insights to future development in the important field of study abroad. This study is being conducted as a part of a Ph.D. dissertation by a student in Higher Education at the University of Minnesota with oversight from a faculty advisory board.

Your participation is very easy and if you complete the survey, you may choose to be entered into a drawing to win one of two $100 appreciation gifts (Visa or Target gift card). Chances of winning depend upon the number of responses received.

To participate in this study:

a. Click on this link or paste it into an internet browser: (xx)
b. Follow the instructions to start the survey
c. Click submit once you have completed the questions

The survey will take about 10 minutes. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from participation at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not impact your relationship with your home institution or your study abroad program in any way.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Your identifying information will be separated from your responses and will be used only for the purposes of contacting you if you are selected as a recipient of one of the gifts.

If you have any questions or require any technical assistance will this survey, please contact Kevin L. Dostal Dauer at kdostaldauer@gmail.com.

Thank you for your participation,
XXX

APPENDIX D

Data Analysis Procedures

Coding

Gender was recoded using (0) for female and (1) for male. Prefer not to answer had only four responses so it was coded as missing data. Parental visits were recoded using (0) for both no and parental visits were prohibited by the program and (1) for yes. Duration of study abroad program was recoded using (0) for Short term (eight weeks or less) and (1) for Quarter or Semester (usually nine to seventeen weeks) and Two Quarters/Semesters or Longer (usually eighteen weeks or more). Type of institution was coded as (0) for Public and (1) for Private. Location of study abroad program was recoded into three separate questions to look at differences of one region against others, with Europe being used as the base reference group since a majority of students study abroad in Europe and a majority of the responses also represented study abroad in Europe. First, Q6_Asia was created by using (1) for Asia and (0) for Europe. Q6_America was created by using (1) for North America and Latin America, South America, and Caribbean and (0) for Europe. Finally, Q6_Other was created to look at differences in other regions of the world by using (1) for other regions (Antarctica; Australia or Oceania; Middle East and North Africa; Sub-Saharan Africa; and Multiple Regions of the World) and (0) for Europe.

Blocks for Regression Analyses

The dependent variables used for the regression analysis were: (1) previous parental education level, (2) previous parental study abroad participation, (3) previous

familial international travel/living experience, (4) previous student international travel/living experience, (5) gender of student, (6) type of institution (public/private), (7) location of study abroad program (using Q6_Asia, Q6_America, and Q6 _Other), and (8) duration of program.

The factors were divided into two blocks for input into the model. Block one consisted of variables related to the parent or student: (1) previous parental education level, (2) previous parental study abroad participation, (3) previous familial international travel/living experience, (4) previous student international travel/living experience, and (5) gender of student. Block two consisted of variables related to the institution or type of program: (1) type of institution (public/private), (2) location of study abroad program (using Q6_Asia, Q6_America, and Q6 _Other), and (3) duration of program.